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Huskers Illustrated

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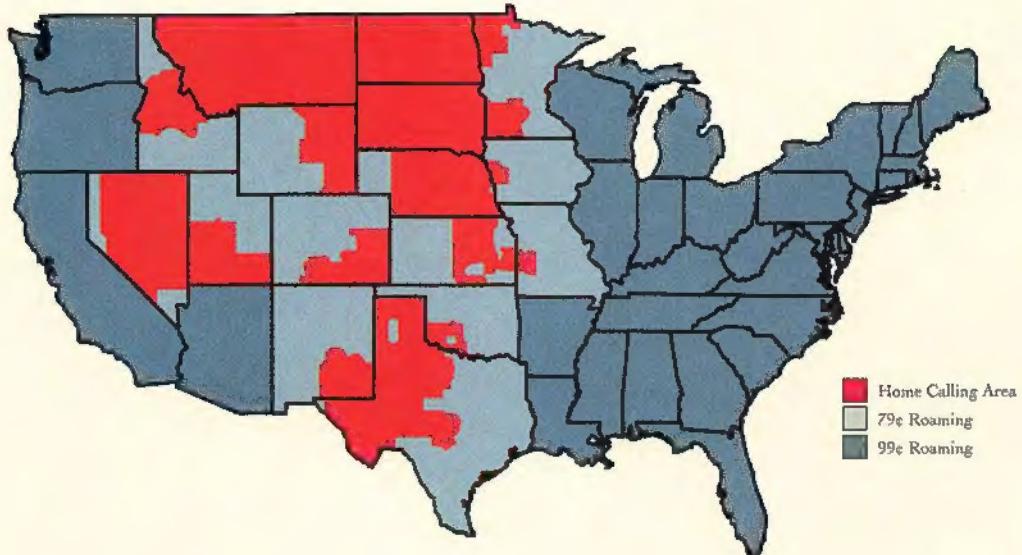
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on the
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CONTENTS

NOV. 6, 1999 • Volume 19, No. 15



14

NEXT ISSUE

The review of the Texas A&M game/preview of Kansas State will be mailed Nov. 8.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter From The Editor	5
NU Notebook	6
<i>Nebraska Coach Frank Solich dismisses criticism of Nebraska's perceived conservatism on offense.</i>	
State Of The Huskers	9
<i>Former Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne suggests the Huskers might have their best defense ever.</i>	
From The West	10
<i>The Huskers still can't get enough offense going when they need it the most.</i>	
From The Beat	11
<i>A lot can still happen in the race for the Bowl Championship Series slots.</i>	
Scouting Report	12
<i>Defending Big 12 champion Texas A&M is looking for consistency after a 2-2 start in conference play.</i>	
Kansas Game Recap	14
4th and Inches	17
Kansas Game Statistics	19
Profile	23
<i>Clint Finley learned about how serious Texans were about football as the son of a high school coach.</i>	
Team Of The Decade	24
<i>Johnny Rodgers capped his impressive career by doing a little of everything in the Jan. 1, 1973, Orange Bowl.</i>	
Crossword Puzzle	28
This Week In Husker History	28
25 Years Of Women's Athletics	29
<i>Maurice Ivy led the Nebraska women's basketball team to its first conference title and NCAA Tournament berth in 1988.</i>	
Side Out	30
<i>Freshman Amber Holmquist has made the most of her move into the starting lineup.</i>	
All Sports	32
<i>Sophomore Meghan Anderson leads the NU soccer team in scoring, but she's far from satisfied with her play.</i>	
Grid Recruiting	34
<i>Offensive line recruit Nick Povendo of Keller, Texas, says he's always been a Husker fan.</i>	
Final Word	38



20 Crouch Learns, Matures

Eric Crouch continues to learn and mature as Nebraska's starting quarterback. By Mike Babcock

ON THE COVER

Bobby Newcombe tries to elude KU's Andrew LeClair. Photo by Scott Bruhn

FROM THE EDITOR

Texas Hangover Almost Costs Huskers

Inspired Jayhawks catch Nebraska looking back, ahead



Brian
HILL

WAS THAT really Kansas in those blue uniforms?

Could those have been the same Jayhawks who hadn't scored a point against Nebraska in two years and had scored just one touchdown in the last

four meetings?

Yes and yes.

Perhaps it was the 30 straight losses to its old rival that inspired the Jayhawks to their near upset.

Perhaps they were still inspired by the speech from former KU standout and NFL Hall of Famer Gale Sayers before their surprising shutout of Missouri a week earlier.

But more than likely it was a case of Nebraska suffering from a giant-sized Texas hangover and/or looking ahead to the perceived larger challenges presented by Texas A&M and Kansas State the next two weeks.

"I was uneasy coming into this game," Nebraska Coach Frank Solich said after the 24-17 victory. "We had to play a Kansas team that played very hard and was playing some of their best football, so I am very pleased (to win). Kansas was very well prepared, and they really played aggressive football in the first half."

KU's 9-0 halftime lead definitely got people's attention around the country, and Solich apparently got his team's attention at halftime.

"Coach Solich did a great job of motivating us at halftime," wingback Bobby Newcombe said. "We went back out there with a lot of enthusiasm. There was a lot of drive and fire."

And the Huskers got the football to their leading playmaker — Newcombe — which had been one of the goals

coming in.

Newcombe's 86-yard punt return gave Nebraska its first lead, with 2:14 remaining in the third quarter.

Then, with the score tied 17-17, quarterback Eric Crouch found Newcombe alone in the KU secondary, and the elusive junior completed the 49-yard scoring play that proved to be the game-winner with 3:24 left.

That game-winning drive also had to be some vindication for Crouch, who had a potential winning drive stall and also coughed up two fumbles in the loss to Texas.

With his 193 yards passing against the Jayhawks, Crouch surpassed the 1,000-yard mark for the season. We sometimes forget that Crouch is only a sophomore, although he is in his third season in the Nebraska program.

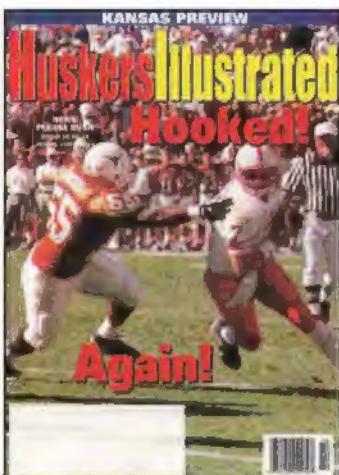
Contributing editor Mike Babcock takes a look at Crouch's maturation process and learning experiences in a feature story on Page 20 of this issue.

Newcombe's heroics against Kansas brought back memories of another outstanding punt returner

and receiver — Johnny Rodgers, who fittingly is the subject of Babcock's story on the Huskers Illustrated Team of the Decade (1970-79) in this edition.

The big plays will have to continue, with a lot more consistency mixed in, if the 1999 Huskers are going to finish the season the way they hope to.

It should be an interesting November. ■



Got Something To Say?

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Same Old Thing?

The perception remains that the Nebraska offense is unimaginative

Prior to the Texas game, Longhorn Coach Mack Brown described Nebraska's run-oriented offense as being about the same as when Bob Devaney was the Cornhusker coach. Brown was joking, sort of.

"Our system is a little bit different from Bob's system," Coach Frank Solich said. "Bob, when he first started of course, had an unbalanced, full-house T, offensive football team."

"And we have not used that up to this point."

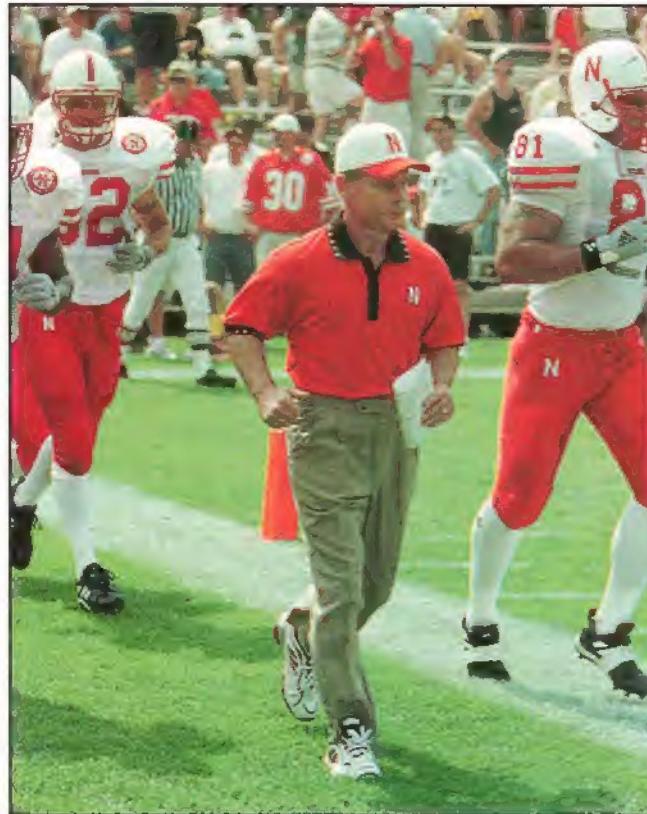
Even though Nebraska's reputation for having a ground-bound offense was earned under Tom Osborne, "Tom, I believe, really loved the passing game," said Solich.

"If you remember, there were a few years where Nebraska threw the ball and threw it considerably. But then that offense eventually evolved into what Tom had at the end of his career."

"And, basically, that is what we're still using at this point in time."

The Cornhuskers led the Big Eight in passing in two of Osborne's first four seasons as head coach, averaging 152.2 yards passing per game in 1974 and 188.0 yards in 1976.

Nebraska led the conference in passing four times under Devaney: 1964, 1967, 1971 and 1972. With Dave Humm at quarterback and Osborne as offensive coordinator, the Cornhuskers



Nebraska Coach Frank Solich dismisses criticism of Nebraska's perceived conservatism on offense.

averaged a school-record 221.0 passing yards per game to rank eighth nationally in NCAA statistics.

That is the only season in modern history in which Nebraska averaged more

than 200 passing yards per game, and it is one of only three seasons in which the Cornhuskers averaged more passing yards than rushing yards. The 1948 team and the 1969 team

were the others.

Despite Nebraska's success with the option, the perception remains that the offense is unimaginative.

"It belongs in a display case at the College Football Hall of Fame, between Lou Holtz's crying towel and Joe Pa's crew socks," Austin American-Statesman columnist Mark Wangrin wrote.

"It should be in one of those time capsules that people will open at the turn of the century."

Solich dismisses criticism of Nebraska's perceived conservatism on offense.

"To be honest with you, I believe you can win football games regardless of the offensive and defensive schemes you have," he said. "It comes down to, one, the players. And then it comes down to both your players understanding the offensive or defensive system and being able to execute it."

"That certainly is, by far, how well you play throughout the course of a year. And we've been fortunate at Nebraska; we've had good players. And our schemes have been sound.■

It Could Have Been Worse

Despite injuries to quarterbacks Tommie Frazier (blood clots) and Brook Berringer (partially collapsed lung), Nebraska persisted and won Coach Tom Osborne's first national championship in 1994.

The Cornhuskers wrapped up the title by defeating Miami in the Orange Bowl game, 24-17.

Had Nebraska remained healthy, allowing players such as Frazier to get into a rhythm, "we would have probably blown Miami out by more points," defensive backs coach

George Darlington said recently. "We wouldn't have been hanging on until the end, making plays and wearing them down. It probably would have been a situation where we were laughing and giggling in the fourth quarter."

And had that happened, the 62-24 victory against Florida in the Fiesta Bowl the next season probably wouldn't have been nearly as surprising, according to Darlington.

"There would have been less of a shock," he said. ■

THEY SAID IT

— Defensive coordinator **Charlie McBride**, on red-shirted freshman **Demoine Adams**, a 6-foot-2, 225-pound rush end: "You put him in there on third-down-and-long, put him on the corner. This guy can fly. If you're an offensive tackle, you'd better be able to move your feet because he can really run."

— Secondary coach **George Darlington**, on the impact of injuries with the NCAA limit of 85 scholarships: "There are always going to be positions where you're going to be pretty thin with quality players who have experience. That's why, I guess, you'd say it's a crapshoot as far as whether a team can survive if it loses two key players at a position. All of a sudden, there's got to be a dropoff."

— Coach **Frank Solich**, on the special-teams play of sophomore linebacker **Randy Stella**: "Randy's been excellent. He's a tremendous football player and will, at some point in time, fit into what we're doing defensively. He's picked up on things very well mentally, and we think he'll be a great, great linebacker for us. In the meantime, what he's doing is helping us tremendously on special teams."

"He's the kind of guy that you try to utilize his ability as much as you can on the football field, and we've tried to do that through special-teams play up to this point."

— Solich, on sophomore center **Dominic Raiola**: "He is really the catalyst of our football team in terms of our up-front players. I think Dominic is a highly energized player, a guy that's got great athletic ability and gives great second effort. We think he's gotten off to a tremendous start in his career here."

"We're very, very high on him." ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

SOLICH CENSURED

Coach Frank Solich received an official reprimand for Big 12 Conference Commissioner Kevin Weiberg as a result of remarks he made about officials' calls in the Texas game.

Solich made the comments on his television show, referring to rover Mike Brown's apparently being held by Texas wide receiver Kwarne Cavin on Major Applewhite's 17-yard touchdown pass to tight end Mike Jones and an Eric Crouch-to-Matt-Davison pass that was ruled incomplete. Solich described the lack of a holding penalty as a "horrendous call" and said officials had done a "ridiculous job."

Solich said he expected the reprimand.

Under Big 12 rules, a second such offense would cost the school a \$5,000 fine and the coach would be suspended for one game. For a third offense, the fine is \$10,000 and a two-game suspension.

For a fourth offense, the fine is \$25,000 and a two-game suspension.

TENSE MOMENTS

The Nebraska volleyball team's return flight from Austin, Texas, was eventful. Takeoff from Austin was delayed for some several hours while the charter jet that carried the team and boosters underwent repairs and then the pilot had difficulty controlling the jet on landing.

"He did a tremendous job," Husker coach Terry Pettit said of the pilot during his weekly news conference. "Twenty minutes after the plane landed, his hand was still on the throttle."

"He was as white as this sheet of paper."

Fortunately, no one was hurt.

THORPE AWARD SEMIFINALIST

Senior cornerback Ralph Brown is among 12 semifinalists for the Jim Thorpe Award as college football's best defensive back. Three finalists will be announced on Nov. 22, with the winner being announced on Dec. 9 at the ESPN College Football Awards Show.

"I know about Jim Thorpe because my dad made me watch the movie about him when I was a kid," Brown told the Lincoln Journal Star. "It is a great honor."

MR. TOUCHDOWN

Former Cornhusker Grant Wistrom intercepted a pass and returned it 91 yards for a touchdown in the St. Louis Rams' 41-13 victory against the Atlanta Falcons in mid-October.

Wistrom is in his second season as a Rams' defensive end.

BRIEFLY NOTED

— Senior weakside linebacker Julius Jackson was named to the CNN/SI.com midseason All-America team. Jackson became a starter when Eric Johnson was sidelined by injury.

— Coach Rhonda Revelle's Husker softball team has received an oral commitment to sign a letter of intent from Peaches James, a pitcher from Papillion-LaVista, Neb., High School.

James picked Nebraska over Oklahoma State and Creighton.

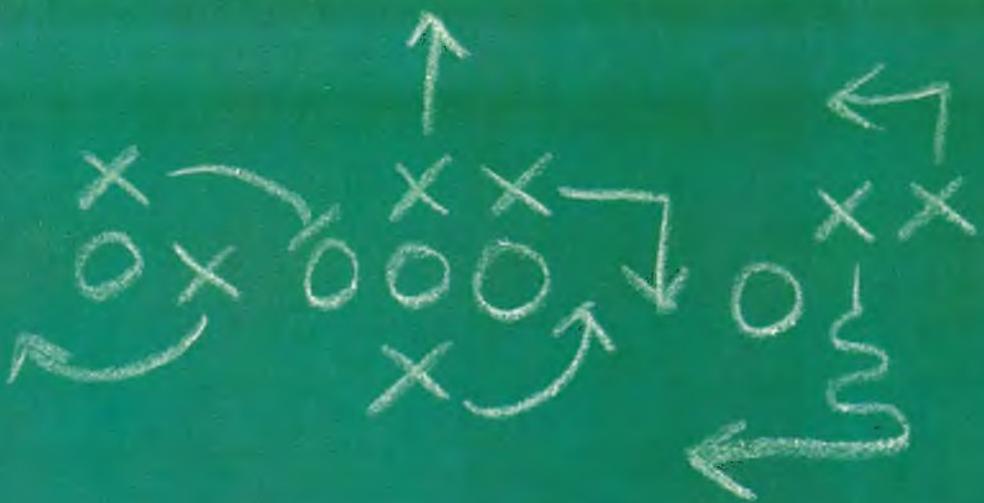
— Coach Paul Sanderford's Husker basketball team has received oral commitments from 5-foot-8 shooting guard KC Cowgill, from Grand Island, Neb., Central Catholic High School and 6-foot-4 Katie Morse from Neola, Iowa, Tri-Center High School.

Karen Jennings, the Huskers' career-scoring leader, also came from Tri-Center High.

— Former Cornhusker football player Aaron Taylor, a two-time All-American and the Outland Trophy winner in 1997, served as an unpaid volunteer assistant coach at Wahoo, Neb., High School this season. Taylor, a seventh-round NFL draft pick, now works as an insurance agent. ■



Ralph Brown



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It's Difficult To Define 'Best'

Former head coach Osborne praises defense during television appearance



**Mike
BABCOCK**

TOM OSBORNE watches tapes of Nebraska's games. He studies the Cornhuskers' play every week at his home, with the critical eye of a Hall of Fame coach, which, of course, he is.

If it were up to him, he would still be coaching. But he made promises and he was concerned about his health and the demands of maintaining a nationally prominent program.

The particulars of his stepping aside after the 1997 season are well-documented.

He still won't commit 100 percent to his retirement from coaching, however. In national interviews on television and radio, he has typically qualified his stepping aside with: Never say never.

But the likelihood of his returning to coaching appears to be infinitesimal.

That was apparent, in a subtle way, during a guest appearance on the Fox Sports cable television network, on the Saturday before the Cornhuskers were upset at Texas.

Among other things, Osborne suggested that Nebraska might have its best defense ever.

Though he was talking about potential, he would never have said such a thing when he was coaching. His record stands in testament to his avoidance of such sweeping generalizations, whether positive or negative. "He's not the worst," he often would say of a player who might have been.

His assertion was a topic of conversation at the Cornhuskers' weekly news conference on the Tuesday prior to the game. "I have not gotten a hold of Coach Osborne this week," Coach Frank Solich said in response to a question about the best-defense-ever remark.

Solich's answer drew laughter from reporters.

"And he has not gotten a hold of me," said Solich.

Then, more seriously, he added: "You know, that remains to be seen of course. We've gotten off to a great start (defensively), but as I've mentioned and our football team understands, the strength of the opponents that we've faced up to this point basically has been their defensive units.

"We'll know more after this weekend as to just where we stand defensively. And we'll know a great deal at the end of the year. So I'm a little more reserved on that end of it right now."

A little more reserved? Solich, like Osborne, avoids generalizations based on part of a season the way Florida coach Steve Spurrier avoids behavior that might be mistaken for modesty.

So does defensive coordinator Charlie McBride. "You never like to step out on a limb until it's all said and done," he said. "I think Tom's probably a better analyst than I'd be on that because he's looking at it, kind of, from an overall picture.

"I probably look at it more from the critical side of it."

McBride also was looking at it from the immediacy of a season in progress. "There's an urgency to do something or get something done better every day in practice," he said.

Obviously, Osborne's timing wasn't good. Texas quarterback Major Applewhite, who bears a remarkable resemblance to a young Osborne, held his own against the Cornhusker defense during the second half, completing 8-of-9 passes for 166 yards and two touchdowns.

Still, the defense played well overall, allowing Texas only 275 total yards, including 62 rushing.

"We just didn't come up with a big play," rover Mike Brown said the next week.

"I think really in my heart, if the defense could have come up with some kind of turnover, a blocked punt or something, the outcome would have been different. There's no doubt in my mind."

Brown's resolve is characteristic of this defense. "We know a lot of things are expected of us, and we want that pressure," he said. "We feel we're capable of playing great defense every Saturday."

It still could be Nebraska's best defense, in fact, depending on how "best" is defined.

But that can't be determined yet. "I don't know how you evaluate until the end of the year and you see what you end up doing because every week is a new challenge," McBride said.

Osborne would have said the same thing while he was coaching. But it's different now. ■



Former Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne made a guest appearance on the Fox Sports network on Oct. 16.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years. Mike can be reached at mdb@inetnebr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

The Philosophy Has Changed

Another loss to Texas shows Huskers' vulnerability



Bob SCHALLER

WELL, THIS MUCH we do know:

After the Texas game, Charlie McBride felt like something you scrape off the bottom of your shoe after running through the pasture during calving season. But he shouldn't have. McBride's taking the bullet was admirable, and it is what you'd expect from a man who is as dedicated to his program and kids as any coach in the nation.

The Huskers still can't get enough offense going at one important moment: When they need it the most.

The Nebraska play calling still leaves a bit to be desired. Against Texas, this one can be picked out anywhere, from a fourth-down option call to the short side of the field to the Huskers' second series: They needed a first down badly, heading into the wind to slow Texas' momentum but went with three designed passing plays, and out, before punting into the wind.

Frank Solich isn't sure what went wrong against Texas, which means he's not quite sure how to fix it. His post-game comments were eerily similar to the ones he made after last year's losses to Texas, Texas A&M, Kansas State and Arizona.

The offensive philosophy in Lincoln has changed. Solich says he'll "take what the defense gives" him, and thus use the pass to set up the run. The philosophy during the Osborne era was, "We will take what we want, how we want."

Osborne used the run to set up the run — the inside dive to keep everyone honest to the outside, and then the outside or quarterback keeper on the option when too many defenders were lined up in the box. And this is one other thing we do know: Teams have always put eight or nine guys "in the box" against the Huskers. Teams doing that aren't doing anything revolutionary or anything different from opponents in the past. The difference was, in the past, that Nebraska said, "Here it comes," and brought it anyway. Now that the Huskers go to the pass so readily, opposing defenses aren't getting worn down from the constant pounding of the big offensive line. That constant pounding let Nebraska pull away in the past, and that's something you haven't seen, and therefore the close calls against Oklahoma State and Missouri last year, and Southern Mississippi this year.

Don't get on this offensive line about what it can or can't do, because it hasn't been given the chance to beat down a defense this season, or even last season, for that matter.

So Solich needs to make the change complete: Recruit big-time playmakers at wide receiver — year in and year out fight Florida State and Florida for the nation's blue chip wideouts. Teach pass-blocking and change the conditioning program at NU, so that passing is a focal part of the program, not a whim or option that "the defense gives us."



Frank Solich says he'll "take what the defense gives" him.

Or go back to the run. Hmm . . . And this is what we don't know:

How Nebraska will respond to this loss, one that gives validation to the cheers of "overrated" before the game from Texas fans. Remember, this is a Texas team that lost to North Carolina State and Kansas State. And these Longhorns escaped Rice — the football team, not the little stuff in Chinese food dishes (though this Rice is far less potent than good rice, if should be noted) — by the narrowest margin, 18-13.

We don't know how or why Nebraska let the Texas game — its first real test of the year — go up in smoke with so much on the line. This is the Texas team that shot down Nebraska's once re-born national championship hopes in 1996. Remember, that was the year that would have been a three-peat. This is the Texas team that came into Lincoln last year, and in very similar fashion, took apart the nation's longest home-winning streak.

There wasn't a sense of urgency in Solich's voice after the game — and perhaps that's a good thing because his team was disappointed enough in itself without having a coach jump down its throat. But there'd better be a sense of urgency. After Kansas comes Texas A&M and Kansas State. Both are in Lincoln, which suddenly has almost zero mystique after . . . guess who — Texas — came in last year and won.

Regardless of what happens across the land, Nebraska is, for all practical purposes, out of the national title picture. No, no, no — don't fool

yourself otherwise, because teams like Florida and a half dozen others will move to the forefront if they keep winning. The best Nebraska can hope for is to win out, win the Big 12 Championship game and get into one of the highest profile, non-title bowl games. That would be a step in the right direction, especially after last season.

It just seemed like this year, with the way the schedule broke, the Huskers were in a prime position for a run at the national title. That's the hardest part of the bitter pill to swallow. This year was designed for Nebraska, it seemed. And in a game it could have — and should have — won, we saw more signs of last year than reasons for optimism.

Without a doubt, we are spoiled in Nebraska, getting a shot at the national title basically every other year — with the way it averages out — in the 1990s. But this was the year that so much could have broken so right for a team that seemed primed to make a run back to the spotlight.

The Huskers can still take a big step forward this season, even after that huge leap backward in Austin.

How it turns out from here on in, though, is anyone's guess. ■

Bob Schaller covers the Huskers for the Scottsbluff Star-Herald. He has also written several books, including "Touchdown Tommie" and "Roar of Silence: The Kenny Walker Story." Bob can be reached at schallero@aol.com.

Goals, Bowl Plans Change After Loss

**Huskers still have shot
at Bowl Championship Series slot**



**Curt
McKEEVER**

FOR THE NEBRASKA football team, life after a third loss to Texas in four years does not include a trip to New Orleans to play for the national championship on Jan. 4.

OK, there's still a remote possibility the Huskers can make it to the Sugar Bowl. But it's time for NU fans, players and coaches to focus their sights elsewhere.

"We really don't have a shot at the national championship," rover Mike Brown said three days after Nebraska's 24-20 loss to the Longhorns. "But we could still win the Big 12 championship, and that's going to have to be the goal for us. If we can win the Big 12, our season's successful. It's a great conference, there's a lot of good teams, and if we can produce a championship, I think we can hold our heads up high."

Nebraska was seventh in the first Bowl Championship Series standings released on Oct. 25, nine weeks into the season. The first six, in order, were Florida State, Penn State, Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Kansas State and Florida.

The top two in the final BCS standings will play at the Sugar Bowl. The standings are based on a complex formula that considers The Associated Press media poll and the USA Today/ESPN coaches' poll, eight computer rankings, strength-of-schedule and number of losses.

Husker fans are sure to spend hours trying to figure out how their team can work its way back into the picture. Brown won't allow himself to go down that route.

"I think it's pretty much impossible. I mean, there's no reason why we should put all our hopes in that," he said. "That's a stress that's not needed, so we just have to focus on what's attainable from here on out, and what is attainable is that we can win the rest of our games and play for the Big 12 championship. I think that's the major goal that we have."

Considering the All-Big 12 candidate is a senior, that's quite an admission.

But it just might be the key to Nebraska playing as well as it can down the stretch. And with Texas A&M, Kansas State and Colorado in front of them, the Huskers will need to bring their "A" game each week.

"That's the goal that was set, to win the Big 12. It's going to be difficult," Brown said. "We have a lot of tests ahead of us. Texas A&M, Kansas State, Colorado — those are some big games for us. There's some teams that beat us last year, but I think we're capable of playing some good football and overcoming some adversity."

If Nebraska runs the table and wins the Big 12 championship in San Antonio on Dec. 4, it is likely headed to the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., on Jan. 2. The Jan. 1 Rose Bowl would remain a possibility, if Penn State went to the Sugar.

If the Huskers make it to the Big 12 championship, they'd probably end up at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas on Jan. 1. If they don't make it to the Big 12 title game, the most likely postseason spot would be at the Alamo Bowl in San Antonio

on Dec. 28, since they'd probably not be considered popular with the Holiday Bowl after having played there last year.

Champions of six conferences — the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and SEC — qualify for a BCS game, and two at-large teams are selected to fill out the field. After the top two teams are decided, the remaining BCS games — the Rose, Orange and Fiesta bowls — select from the remaining pool of qualified teams.

Last season, the system generated a great deal of interest, as three teams — Tennessee, UCLA and Kansas State — entered the final week of the season with perfect records and were 1-2-3 in the BCS standings. If all three won, one team would have been left out of the title game. But the Bruins were upset by Miami and Texas A&M beat Kansas State, leaving the undefeated Vols to play once-beaten Florida State in the Fiesta Bowl.

The BCS standings are released each Monday for the rest of the season until the final poll is announced Sunday, Dec. 5.

If you refuse to give up on Nebraska playing in New Orleans, here's how the top six in the BCS poll on Oct. 25 finish the season:

Florida State — Maryland, at Florida (Nov. 20)

Penn State — Minnesota, Michigan, at Michigan State.

Virginia Tech — at West Virginia, Miami, at Temple, Boston College (Nov. 26)

Tennessee — Notre Dame, at Arkansas, at Kentucky, Vanderbilt.

Kansas State — Colorado, at Nebraska, Missouri.

Florida — Vanderbilt, at South Carolina, Florida State, Southeastern Conference championship.

Even if Florida State would happen to lose to Florida, the Seminoles would probably stay ahead of Nebraska in the BCS standings. So it looks like the best scenario for the Huskers would be if Florida State won out and Penn State, Virginia Tech, and Tennessee all slipped up somewhere.

Brown suggests NU fans do what the Huskers are doing and move on to the next-best option.

"Nebraska fans, and just Nebraska football, is just spoiled. Three national championships in the '90s, I mean, that's expected now," he said. "That's always our goal that is set, and then when you don't get it everyone seems to be sad about it. But we can still have a successful season. We know as a team that if we can win the rest of our games and have one loss for the season, that's a great season."

And maybe with a little luck, Nebraska might get another crack at those pesky Longhorns.

"It'd be nice to play them again, but if we could just play in the Big 12 championship, that would be an honor," Brown said. ■



Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Scouting Report

Embarrassing Loss Motivates A&M

Defending champion Aggies look for consistency after 2-2 start in Big 12

With a wealth of experience returning from last year's Big 12 Conference championship team, Texas A&M was the overwhelming favorite in the Big 12 South.

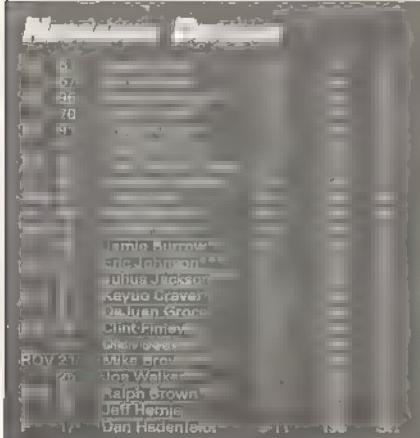
That tag didn't last long, however, as the Aggies fell to Texas Tech 21-19 in their conference opener.

If that slip wasn't enough to show the rest of the conference they were mere mortals this time around, the Aggies went to Oklahoma three weeks

Tentative 2 Deeps

Nebraska Offense

SE	3	Matt Davison**	8-1	180	J
	9	Wilson Thomas	6-5	210	
LT	69	Adam Jelich***	6-5	320	S
	68	Jon Ruthrofurd*	6-3	295	S
LG	83	James Sherman***	6-4	295	S
	77	Tony Fonoti	6-4	330	F
C	54	Dominic Raioza*	6-2	295	S
	51	Matt Baldwin**	6-2	285	S
RG	55	Russ Hochstein***	6-3	280	J
	64	Steve A stadt	6-5	275	
RT	58	Dave Volk*	6-5	295	S
	75	Kyle Kollmorgen*	6-5	290	S
TE	85	T.J. DeBates***	6-3	250	
end	87	Bretz Wistrom	6-5	220	S
QB	7	Eric Crouch*	8-1	195	
	14	Jeff Penning*	6-2	210	
FB	15	Willie Miller*	6-1	240	J
	35	Tyrone Uhrl	6-0	230	
IB	38	Dan Acker mor*	6-0	245	
	36	Corey Burkholder*	6-0	225	
WB	82	Seal Ap kapele**	5-9	185	S
enc.	12	Bolton Newcombe*	6-0	195	J
PK	26	Bob Brown	6-2	185	



TEXAS A&M (6-2) VS NEBRASKA (7-1)



Nov. 6, 1999 • 2:30 p.m. • ABC •
• Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

days that our guys have had to leave this stadium after a loss. That means a lot more to me than the 100 victories."

Since 1960, only two coaches have reached 100 faster than Slocum. Oklahoma's Barry Switzer won game No. 100 in the third game of his 11th season (1983), and Nebraska's Tom Osborne reached the milestone in the fourth game of his 11th year (1983).

MCCOWN OVERCOMES INJURY

Fifth-year senior quarterback

Tentative 2 Deeps

Time And Date

Rocky Bernard
Carmela Mad
Doris Appler
Evelyn Johnson
Donald L.
Larry McNeil
Tom Glenn
Stian Rodriguez
John J.J. Anthony
Freddie Robert Carr
Dan Lemire
Chad Franklin
Roykin Brady
Mike Farley

Texas A&M Offense

X	80	Chris Cole**	6-0	195	Sr
	81	M. Bungo dner***	6-2	194	Sr
RT	78	Andy Vincent***	6-4	304	Sr
	76	Michael Mahen	6-6	292	Fr
RG	82	Semis Heimil ***	6-2	309	Sr
	51	Taylor Whitley	6-4	305	Fr
C	77	Seth McKinney	6-3	290	So.
	58	Toby McCarthy*	6-2	274	Jr.
LG	71	Chris Valetta**	6-3	287	Jr.
	72	Billy Yates	6-1	280	Fr
LT	74	Tango McCauley	6-3	294	So.
	76	Michael Mahan	6-6	292	Fr
TE	82	R. Broughton**	6-1	247	Jr
	87	Michael de la Torre	6-5	244	Fr
Z	7	Chris Taylor**	5-11	184	Jr
	88	Leroy Hodge***	6-2	209	Sr
QB	15	Randy McCown***	6-1	213	Sr
	10	Mark Farris	6-2	212	Fr
B	5	Ja Mar Toombs**	6-0	265	So.
	20	D. Hardeman***	5-10	242	Sr
A	3	Eric Bernard**	5-9	190	Sr
	34	Dante Hal ***	5-8	196	Sr
PK	13	Terrence Kitt hens	5-9	165	Jr.

later and were drubbed 51-6. A&M rebounded with a 21-3 victory over Oklahoma State in College Station to push its conference record to 3-2 and overall mark to 6-2 entering a Nov. 6 test at Nebraska.

"The team went to work in practice last week, and that effort showed in the way we played today," Coach R.C. Slocum said after the win over Oklahoma State. "We talked a bunch this week about having people step into leadership roles for us."

Seven players from last year's team moved on to the NFL, and Slocum said the loss of leadership cannot be underestimated

"People assume that since we won last year, we would be the favorites again," he said. "But it's even harder to win because everyone is gunning for the champions. Being picked to win in the preseason means nothing. What matters is this team and this year's seniors."

SLDCUM GETS 100TH VICTORY

Saturday's victory over Oklahoma State was Slocum's 100th career coaching victory.

"It's fitting the the 100th win came in a game where we really needed to get a win," Slocum said. "The thing that I'm most proud of is the record that we have here at Kyle Field in the '90s. I was telling the players and the recruits after the game that, in this decade, there have been only four

PICKS

Brian Hill
Editor

Nebraska 34, Texas A&M 20

The defending Big 12 champions have struggled against good teams and some not-so-good teams (see 21-19 loss to Texas Tech). Nebraska is a very good team.

Mike Kubcock
Contributing Editor

Nebraska 20, Texas A&M 7

The Aggies have been inconsistent. They upset Nebraska at College Station last year but they'll be hard-pressed to do that again, at Memorial Stadium. Nebraska's defense has much to prove yet, as does the offense. If the Cornhuskers can avoid self-destructing, particularly by taking care of the ball and not turning it over, the final score could be more lopsided than this.

Neh Unheller
Contributing Writer

Nebraska 36, Texas A&M 15

This is one of those "make-a-statement" games if the Huskers are going to have any shot at getting back into the national title picture. Texas A&M will no doubt view this as the biggest remaining game on its schedule: It can run its winning streak against Nebraska to two (the second-longest winning streak against NU in the Lone Star state) and keep from plunging out of the top 25. Ironically, this was supposed to be R.C. Slocum's year, and now it could end being his last. Nebraska rolls because power and talent win out over pride.

Terry Douglass
Grand Island Independent
Sports Editor

Nebraska 17, Texas A&M 14

Look for a good old fashioned defensive battle at Memorial Stadium. After the Texas game, Nebraska should avoid using revenge as motivation against the Aggies. The desire to win a Big 12 Conference title should be enough to keep the Cornhuskers' fire burning bright.



Texas A&M quarterback Randy McCown, a fifth-year senior, has passed for 1,901 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Randy McCown is on a school-record pace of 237.6 passing yards per game, while completing 54.5 percent.

McCown suffered a separated shoulder (to his non-throwing arm) in the loss to Oklahoma but went the entire game against Oklahoma State, completing 20 of 29 passes for 242 yards.

"I knew we could come back," McCown said. "To be able to play today the way we did means so much to me. Everybody showed so much heart and gave so much effort. I spoke to the seniors earlier today, and we just came out and showed everybody who we are."

McCown said it will take that same type of effort to compete with Nebraska.

"We're going up to Lincoln next week, and we're not going to give up," he said. "I could have broken my back and still cared less because we got a win today. This was the most satisfying win all year."

NO 100-YARD RUSHERS

Through eight games, Texas A&M has not had a 100-yard rusher this season.

Senior Eric Bernard's 80 yards on 15 carries against Oklahoma State was the top rushing effort of the season,

bettering the 71 yards gained by senior Dante Hall vs. Louisiana Tech. Hall set out the OSU game with a sprained ankle.

A&M's leading rusher is 6-foot, 265-pound sophomore Ja'Mar Tombs, who has gained 340 yards and scored four touchdowns.

Last year against Nebraska, Hall carried 32 times for 113 yards and a touchdown, and Tombs rushed 10 times for 110 yards and a score.

BUMGARDNER'S BEST

Senior received Matt Bumgardner had the best game of his career against Oklahoma State, setting career highs in receptions (5), yards (79) and touchdowns (2). All three of his career touchdowns have been against OSU.

"We're not used to what happened to us last week," Bumgardner said. "I think the team responded well today. It was good to get things back on track and get a win today."

A&M's leading receiver has been junior Chris Taylor, who has 29 catches for 552 yards and four touchdowns.

VETERAN SECONDARY

Texas A&M's senior-laden secondary has picked off 14 passes so far this season.

The Aggies start three seniors and a junior, and the foursome has 109 games of starting experience between them.

TOP-NOTCH KICKERS

Junior Terence Kitchens was considered a long shot when he arrived on campus as a walk-on place-kicker three years ago. But Kitchens has proven to be a "long shot" of a different sort this season.

Kitchens has connected on four 50-yard-plus field goals this season, including a school-record 62-yarder against Southern Mississippi. The 62-yarder was a school record (without a tee) and tied for the second longest in NCAA history without a tee.

For the season, Kitchens has connected on 15-of-21 field goals and 28-of-28 PATs. He started the season with eight straight field goals, which is also a school record.

The Aggies also boast one of the nation's top punters in senior All-American Shane Lechler, who ranked fifth nationally entering the OSU game, with an average of 46.2 yards per kick. He has a career average of 44.5. ■

GAME RECAP



Big Boost By Bobby

Newcombe's heroics help Huskers hold off inspired Jayhawks

By the end of his freshman season, Bobby Newcombe was being compared to Johnny Rodgers, an extraordinary offensive player and Nebraska's first Heisman Trophy winner.

After a season and two games of trying his hand at quarterback, Newcombe settled back in at wingback. And against Kansas he began resurrecting the comparisons to Rodgers with a performance that enabled Nebraska to escape Lawrence with an unexpectedly dramatic 24-17 victory.

Newcombe returned a punt 86 yards for a touchdown with 2:14 left in the third quarter to give the Cornhuskers their first lead at 10-9, and then ran 49 yards with an Eric Crouch pass for the winning touchdown with 3:24 remaining. "Great players make great plays," roared Mike Brown said.

Story by Mike Babcock — Photos by Scott Bruhn



Gregg List blocks a punt off the foot of Joey Pelfanio in the third quarter. The ball traveled 22 yards to the KU 23, setting up a field goal and Nebraska's first points of the game.



Mike Brown (21), Carlos Polk (13) and Steve Warren (96) combine to bring down Kansas fullback Moran Norris. The 6-foot-2, 245-pound junior rushed 17 times for 80 yards.

"He was all over the field tonight. He's special."

Nebraska Coach Frank Solich agreed. "It was just an outstanding individual performance," he said. "I don't think anyone walked out of that stadium without appreciating what Bobby Newcombe did."

Solich meant appreciating as in respecting.

Kansas fans, who seemed to be in the minority in a less-than-capacity crowd estimated at 45,100, certainly couldn't have appreciated Newcombe's efforts in any other sense.

If not for him, the Jayhawks probably would have pulled the upset.

And if not for him, Nebraska could have seen its hopes of playing for the Big 12 championship and salvaging the season in the rearview mirror as it headed home.

"Today was a big, big day for him," said Solich.

"He did a great job. But there were also some other guys."

Among them were several players on the Cornhusker defense, which managed to make enough adjustments at halftime to keep the pressure on Kansas quarterback Dylen Smith

The junior college transfer from Santa Monica, Calif., completed 16-of-30 passes for a career-high 217

yards and both Kansas touchdowns. But Nebraska sacked him five times

And it made the plays to stop him at the end.

"This is the kind of game you practice for," said Cornhusker defensive tackle Steve Warren, who was credited with three tackles, including one for a 10-yard loss.

For more than three quarters, "it was about like a repeat of last week," defensive tackle Loran Kaiser said, referring to Nebraska's 24-20 loss to Texas at Austin. "We score. Bam, they hit us right back. And you kind of look at yourself and wonder: 'What's going on here?'"

After Crouch capped a seven-

4TH & INCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Kansas Game

WELCOME BACK, E.J.

Senior weakside linebacker Eric Johnson has been back at full-speed the last two weeks, after being sidelined by a knee injury, suffered early in the Southern Mississippi game.

He was credited with four tackles in the Texas game, and he was credited with four tackles against Kansas, including two for losses totaling 7 yards - one of them a sack.

Even though senior Julius Jackson, his replacement in the starting lineup, played extremely well, "it's great to have him back," defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "When you have Julius and him at linebacker where you can keep fresh legs on the field, that's always a plus."

Johnson was expected to miss four-to-six weeks because of the sprained MCL. But "I would say that a week was enough for him. He was probably ready to go in a week," said McBride.

"He's an interesting person because his enthusiasm reminds me a lot of Roger Craig."

Craig, a running back who went on to an outstanding career in the National Football League, "loved to practice," McBride said, adding that Johnson also "loves to just play. And his endurance, you couldn't get him tired. He's one of those guys that can run forever. When he's out on the field, he's excited about practicing. He's excited about playing. He brings the energy of the team up."

BIG BACK = BIG CHALLENGE

Nebraska's defense faced a big challenge, literally, in Kansas fullback Moran Norris, a 6-foot-2, 245-pound junior who had scored a touchdown in each of the previous three games.

"When you go against a big guy like that, you know it's going to be a lot of pounding and a physical game," Cornhusker rover Mike Brown said. "But that's the style of game we like to play."

Norris rushed for 106 yards in the Jayhawks' 21-0 victory against Missouri.

He led Kansas rushers with 80 yards on 17 carries.

RAIOLA LEADS PANCAKE PARADE

Center Dominic Raiola went into the game as the Cornhusker leader in knock down blocks or "pancakes." The sophomore from Honolulu had 77 in seven games, an average of 11.0 per game. The school single-season record is 11.64 "pancakes" per game by Aaron Taylor in 1997.

Guard Russ Hochstein was second on the team with 68 "pancake" blocks.

SHRELY NOTED

— Kansas defensive lineman Dion Johnson: "I thought we'd pull it out. We came here with the intent to beat them, and we feel like we had that chance. That's why this hurts."

— Kansas linebacker Tim Bowers: "In the past, they've run us over with the option. I'm sure that was their game plan again this year. The last thing we thought they'd beat us with was the pass."

— Kansas coach Terry Allen: "I think we came in believing we could win. We played extremely well defensively. The intensity of from the Missouri game carried over to tonight's game. The punt returns cost us the game in the second half. Other than that, we did a good job."

— Nebraska has defeated Kansas 31 consecutive times, and the Cornhuskers have scored 30 or more points in all but four of the games in the winning streak. Kansas was ranked No. 6 in the Associated Press poll the last time it defeated Nebraska, 23-13 in 1968 at Lincoln.

Nebraska-Kansas is the nation's longest continuous Division IA series and the third-longest overall. This year's game was the 106th meeting between the schools.

— When Jeremy Siechta suffered a knee injury during practice the first week of October, it appeared he would be lost for the season. But the sophomore defensive tackle returned to practice the week before the Kansas game and could see action in this week's game against Texas A&M.

He's playing with a brace and could have surgery on the knee after the season.

Fullback Willie Miller (ankle sprain) and weakside linebacker and special teams player Randy Stella (hamstring) also weren't included on the 70-player travel roster because of injuries.

Other Cornhuskers who were ailing during the week were offensive tackle Adam Juich (elbow, back), defensive tackle Jason Lohr (ankle sprain), tight end Tracey Wistrom (hamstring), middle linebacker Carlos Polk (ankle sprain) and fullback Tyrone Uhlir (abdominal muscle). ■

play, 53-yard touchdown drive with an 8-yard run to make the score 17-9 and give the Cornhuskers some apparent breathing room with 12:09 remaining in the game, Kansas responded 25 seconds later with a 77-yard, Smith-to-Michael-Chandler touchdown pass.

Nebraska came right back, driving from its own 29-yard line to the Kansas 25 before stalling and calling on redshirted freshman Josh Brown for a 43-yard field goal attempt, which missed.

The Cornhuskers got the ball back with 5:53 remaining at their own 26-yard line.

"I thought we had enough time," said Crouch, who kept the drive alive with a sneak on fourth-and-inches just over mid-field, on the play before the touchdown pass to Newcombe.

"You've got to believe in yourself and your team the whole game," said Crouch, who completed 11-of-20 passes for 193 yards. "I don't think it was lucky. It showed the character of our team."

Character was an issue throughout the week in the wake of the Texas loss.

"You would think it would take a lot of heart out of our team," Crouch said. "And I think it took a little out of us in the first half. One hundred percent of it can't be attributed to the (Texas) loss."

"But it had a little bit to do with it."

Whatever the reason, the Cornhuskers struggled on offense during the first half. They picked up only three first downs and gained 69 total yards, including 34 rushing on 17 attempts.

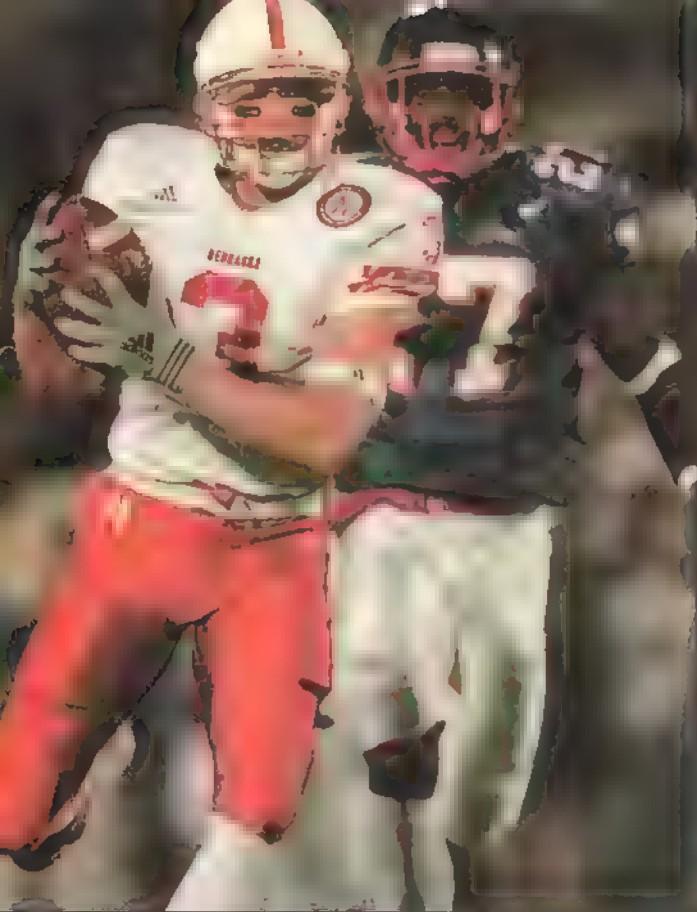
Kansas led 9-0 at the intermission, on a blocked-punt safety and a 22-yard touchdown pass from Smith to tight end David Hurst, following a 79-yard drive early in the second quarter.

"It seemed like in the first half, we weren't the most physical team," said Crouch.

That might have changed in the second half, as Nebraska made some defensive adjustments and came out aggressively on offense. The Cornhuskers' first play from scrimmage in the second half was a pass from Crouch to split end Matt Davison, good for 63 yards to the Kansas 17-yard line.

The pass to Davison was "a huge play," Crouch said.

On second-and-7 from the Jayhawk 14, however, Dan



Split end Matt Davison catches the football on a 63-yard pass play from Eric Crouch. KU's Kareem High gives chase.

Alexander lost a fumble, which Kansas recovered at its own 1-yard line. That the Cornhuskers were able to overcome such mistakes "was tremendous in terms of our players responding when they had to get it done," Solich said.

"They were able to fight through it all with a great will to win."

"I think our coaching staff feels tremendous about our football team showing the character to come from behind. We had big plays in a lot of areas by individuals."

I-back Correll Buckhalter, who started for the first time this season, was among those individuals, rushing for 116 yards. And cornerback Keyuo Craver was another, making 10 tackles.

Mike Brown made seven tackles. And middle linebacker Carlos Polk was credited with five.

Solich admitted he was "a little uneasy coming into the game" because of the emotional implications of the Texas loss. "The momentum seemed to sway back and forth so quickly," he said.

"Without question, we got their (the Jayhawks') best shot."

"I knew this game would not be easy for our team emotionally."

"I think the spirit of our team was strengthened tonight," said Newcombe.

He played a significant role in that strengthening.

"I know that he's wanted to be able to show his talents and produce plays," Solich said.

No one was comparing him to Rodgers just yet. But the signs were there.

"Definitely today he was our game-breaker," said Crouch. ■

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BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs. Kansas
Oct. 30, 1999 • Lawrence, Kan.

Score By Quarters

Nebraska	0	0	10	14	—	24
Kansas	2	7	0	8	—	17

Team Stats

	NU	KU
First Downs	15	17
Rushing	10	8
Passing	4	10
Penalty	1	1
Rushing Attempts	42	39
Yards Gained Rushing	194	171
Yards Lost Rushing	21	55
Net Yards Rushing	173	116
Net Yards Passing	193	217
Passes Attempted	20	31
Passes Completed	11	16
Had Intercepted	0	1
Total Plays	62	70
Total Net Yards	366	333
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.9	4.8
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-0
Penalties-Yards	6-59	4-35
Punts-Yards	9-284	11-462
Avg. Per Punt	35.5	42.0
Punt Returns-Yards	8-199	4-16
Interceptions-Yards	1-0	0-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	1-13	5-97
Possession Time	28:18	31:42

Scoring

- KU** — Team safety
- KU** — David Hurst 22-yard pass from Dylen Smith (Joe Garcia kick)
- NU** — Josh Brown 31-yard field goal
- NU** — Bobby Newcombe 86-yard punt return (Brown kick)
- NU** — Eric Crouch 8-yard run (Brown kick)
- KU** — Mike Chandler 77-yard pass from Smith (Chandler pass from Smith)
- NU** — Newcombe 49-yard pass from Crouch (Brown kick)
- Att.** — 45,100
- Temp.** — 62

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Buckhalter, C.	22	118	5.3	15	0
Diedrick, D.	3	27	9.0	15	0
Alexander, D.	3	20	6.7	8	0
Crouch, E.	13	14	1.1	9	1
Newcombe, B.	1	-4	-4.0	0	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	11-20-0	55.0	193	1

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Davidson, M.	8	108	18.0	83	0
Newcombe, B.	4	89	22.3	49	1
Buckhalter, C.	1	-4	-4.0	0	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Hadenfeldt, D.	7	284	40.6	53
Team	1	0	0.0	0

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Newcombe, B.	2	115	57.5	86	1
Walker, J.	5	84	14.0	28	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	1	13	13.0	13	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Craver, K.	6	4	10	0-0	0	0
Brown, M.	4	3	7	0-0	1-0	0
Polk, C.	4	2	8	1-10	0	1-10
Wells, A.	3	2	8	1-11	0	1-11
Vander Bosch, K.	4	0	4	0	0	0
Johnson, E.	4	0	4	2-7	0	1-4
Booker, D.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Kaiser, L.	2	2	4	1-1	0	0
Groce, D.	3	0	3	0	0	0
Ortiz, T.	3	0	3	1-6	1	1-6
Warren, S.	2	1	3	1-10	0	1-10
Finley, C.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Jackson, J.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Loh, J.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Vedra, M.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Adams, D.	1	0	1	1-2	0	0
Garrison, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Shaw, B.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Brown, R.	1	0	1	0	0	0

KANSAS

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Norris, M.	7	80	4.7	18	0
Winbush, D.	5	20	4.0	12	0
Bowles, M.	5	13	2.6	8	0
Smith, D.	11	4	0.4	22	0
Team	1	-1	-1.0	0	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Smith, D.	16-30-0	53.3	217	2
Childs, H.	0-1-1	0.0	0	0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Chandler, M.	4	106	26.5	77	1
Hill, H.	3	23	7.7	14	0
Hurst, D.	2	31	15.5	22	1
Winbush, D.	2	7	3.6	6	0
Childs, H.	1	18	18.0	18	0
Gulley, J.	1	17	17.0	17	0
Paige, A.	1	10	10.0	10	0
Norris, M.	1	7	7.0	7	0
Bowles, M.	1	-2	-2.0	0	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Pelfamo, J.	10	440	44.0	49
Team	1	22	22.0	22

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Childs, H.	3	75	5.0	9	0
Jordan, M.	1	1	1.0	1	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Nesmith, C.	7	4	11	1-4	0	0
High, K.	7	3	10	1-1	0	0
LeClair, A.	6	1	7	1-1	0	0
Rogers, M.	5	1	6	4-10	0	0
Johnson, D.	2	3	5	2-4	0	1-3
Bowers, T.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Rayford, D.	1	2	3	1-3	0	1-2
Murphy, C.	2	0	2	1-1	0	1-1
Williams, J.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Collier, C.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Davison, A.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Abdul-Rahim, M.	1	1	2	0	0	0



Tony Ortiz sacks KU's Dylen Smith, forcing a fumble, which the Jayhawks recovered.

SEAS IN STATS

RUSHING

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Alexander, D.	8	92	529	6.6	4
Crouch, E.	9	96	393	4.9	10
Buckhalter, C.	7	73	475	6.5	5
Diedrick, D.	8	34	187	5.4	0
McIver, W.	6	27	114	4.2	1
Newcombe, B.	8	36	92	12.0	3
Evans, D.	7	19	74	3.7	0
Perino, J.	8	12	54	4.5	0
Uhler, T.	7	19	28	4.7	0
Kingston, B.	5	8	19	3.8	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	50-97-3	52.7	1,006	7
Newcombe, B.	11-18-1	61.1	246	2
Perino, J.	0-1-0	0.0	0	0
Chisman, J.	0-0-0	0.0	0	0

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Davidson, M.	8	24	395	16.5	2
Wistrom, T.	8	10	337	33.7	1
Newcombe, B.	8	10	190	19.0	3
Applegate, S.	8	4	87	21.8	0
Alexander, D.	8	4	58	14.0	0
Buckhalter, C.	7	3	21	7.0	0
McIver, W.	8	3	28	8.7	0
Gibson, J.	8	2	19	9.5	2
London, F.	8	2	11	5.5	0
Crouch, E.	8	1	60	60.0	1

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, J.	8	10	6	37

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Hadenfeldt, D.	40	1,793	45.0	73

Learning, Maturing

**1998 K-State game
adds a twist to
Crouch's development**

By Mike Babcock

The image remains vivid. On fourth-and-8 at the Nebraska 32-yard line, in the final minutes of last season's 40-30 loss at Kansas State, Eric Crouch was pulled down by the facemask.

Kansas State's Travis Ochs was the culprit. But the officials did nothing.

Had a penalty been called, the Cornhuskers might have capitalized on the opportunity and somehow avoided their first loss to Kansas State in 30 years. There's no way of knowing, really.

The point is moot, anyway. That was then. And this is now.

Still, the play is significant in Crouch's development as a quarterback. As with any athlete, the sophomore from Omaha is the sum of his experiences. And his experiences, good and bad, this season and last, are shaping him in a way that compares to Nebraska's best quarterbacks.

No less an authority on the subject than former Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne said as much at mid-season, during a guest appearance on the Fox Sports cable television network.

Crouch was playing at a level comparable to that of such former Nebraska quarterbacks as Tommie Frazier and Turner Gill at the same point in their careers, said Osborne.

The week before, Coach Frank Solich offered a similar assessment. "I think Eric has been playing outstanding football," he said. "I've been really impressed with what he's gotten done, throwing the ball as well as running the option, and in

general just running our whole football team.

"I think you could take Eric Crouch and you could fit him into any offense that exists around the country today. I feel that strongly about him and the kind of player he is."

"You could put him in a passing attack and he would do very, very well, regardless of whether you're talking about a sprint-out type of attack or a drop-back passing attack.

"Of course, in our offense he fits extremely well."

There was never any doubt about Crouch's ability to run with the ball. He had a running back's rushing statistics at Millard North High School, as a quarterback in an option offense.

His junior season in high school, he ran for 1,960 yards. His senior season, despite missing three games because of an ankle injury, he ran for 1,300 yards and 15 touchdowns.

He also passed for nearly 1,400 yards, combined, in those two seasons. But it was his running and his option experience that earned the two-time all-stater a scholarship from Nebraska.

The state's last two-time all-state quarterback was Wood River's Scott Frost (in 1991-92).

Frost led the Cornhuskers to the national championship as a senior in 1997, by rushing and passing for more than 1,000 yards, something only nine other NCAA Division I-A players had done.

Crouch has the skills to join the 1,000/1,000 club before he's done, though probably not this season. Barring injury, he'll pass for 1,000 yards — he might have already. But he won't likely rush for 1,000 yards. Seven games into the season, he had 385 yards rushing on 83 carries.

He was the team's second-leading rusher, however.

He also was the most efficient



Through the first seven games, Eric Crouch had rushed for 385 yards and passed for 813

passer in the Big 12, though he didn't have enough attempts to qualify for the NCAA statistical rankings. He had completed 45-of-77 passes (58.4 percent) for 813 yards and six touchdowns, with only three interceptions, an efficiency rating of 165.1.

Last season, he completed less than 50 percent of his passes.

Crouch has worked hard on his passing, and "I think that has really showed," said Solich. "He's always had a strong arm. But if there's one thing, as we looked at the passing game, that he might improve on in the off-season, it would be his touch.



No Doubt Crouch Is in Charge

have to work on to be the best that you can be and to really fit in with this type of offensive scheme that we have here."

He has had to refine his other option skills in order to become comfortable in a much more complex offense than the one to which he was accustomed in high school.

"I know this offense 10 times better this year than I did last year," he said. "And that goes along with just being here and running the plays every day and now being the starter. I get to do that. I get all the reps with the ones (in practice), and it seems like it makes things a lot easier come Saturday."

He started six games last season, including the final four, completing 12-of-28 passes for 193 yards and two touchdowns, with two interceptions, in the Holiday Bowl loss to Arizona.

He succeeded Bobby Newcombe as the starter in the third game this season, against Southern Mississippi, and he's been the starter ever since — with Newcombe playing wingback.

Crouch no longer has to look over his shoulder, something he claims wasn't a problem when he and Newcombe were competing for the starting job and after Newcombe earned it.

Crouch's experiences last season have served him well. "It seems like the game has kind of slowed down for me in a way compared to my freshman year," he said. "I'd come out on the field and it seemed like everything was happening so fast, and before I knew it, the play was over.

"It was really interesting coming out on the field this year and feeling comfortable with myself and knowing I can compete at this level because I did it last year."

No amount of practice is worth the experience of being pulled down by the facemask with time running out against the nation's No. 2-ranked team on the road.

Crouch has been there and done that. And it definitely shows.

"With that added experience, whatever rough edges he might have had, and there weren't many, he's smoothed them out," Solich said. "I thought he was composed last year.

"But I think as any quarterback matures, you just see a self-confidence that's there."

And he sees that confidence in Crouch. ■

And I think he's done that."

Crouch spent considerable time over the summer on the passing game, not just throwing, which he did a lot, but also "reading routes, reading defenses and coverages," he said. "A lot of guys put a tremendous amount of time in, and effort, trying to get our passing game to its fullest potential."

Despite his passing statistics in high school, "I don't know how good of a passer I would have been because I really didn't throw the ball much," Crouch said. "I probably would have said I was a fair or an OK passer. But I think I've really grown in being able to throw the ball and run the ball both."

"In an offense like Nebraska's those are some of the things you

Eric Crouch wasn't exactly timid in the huddle. But he could have been more assertive.

It was a function of age. He was a redshirted freshman last season.

Now he's a sophomore. And the difference in his demeanor is dramatic.

The reason for the change? "I think really just confidence," said junior I-back Dan Alexander. "Almost anybody who's been a starter or who has played one year, you come in with a lot more confidence in your abilities, looking at what you did last year and looking at how you improved."

Crouch has been much more relaxed in the huddle, and he has left no doubts about his being in charge. "I feel like I'm in more control than I was last year," he said.

He'll criticize as well as praise teammates, a necessary quality for a leader.

"When someone messes up, it's good to really get on them, but in a positive way, to make sure they know they made a mistake that needs to be fixed, that they can't do it again," he said.

"In an offense like ours, execution is the key to every big play. And we've got so many plays to where, if you execute the right way, they're going to be big plays pretty much every time."

Even though Nebraska's option offense is occasionally described by those unfamiliar with it as unimaginative, it's far from that, according to Crouch, who continues to learn it.

"I think if we really wanted to, we could run a different play on every (down) of the game for three games in a row and teams wouldn't know really what to expect," he said.

In addition to familiarizing himself with the offense, Crouch has familiarized himself with those around him. After a season as a

medical redshirt and a season of playing, he has gotten to know his teammates, and that has allowed him to feel comfortable leading them.

"I've felt like I've grown with this team and this offense, some of the linemen, the running backs and the receivers," he said. "I think it's something that happens naturally when you're around players so much, and you tend to have more things in common. You find out a little bit about each other."

As a result, "you can relate to them a lot more. It's easier for you to talk to them and it's easier for you to play with those guys. I think that's one reason this team has great unity this year."

"It seems like everybody's (pulling) together and we're playing for one another. We don't have any individuals out on the field, thinking it's their game or it's their show. There have been a lot of situations this season where that has shown, where we've had team unity and great chemistry."

That unity and chemistry will be tested as the Cornhuskers make their stretch run. Their goal of a per-



Eric Crouch started six games as a red-shirt freshman in 1998.

fect season is gone, and so, probably, is a run at a national championship. But they still have goals to achieve and for those such as Crouch, who will return next season, improvement to be made.

In one year's time, "I think he's gotten better in all areas of the game, definitely with a better knowledge

"I think if we really wanted to, we could run a different play on every (down) of the game for three games in a row, and teams wouldn't know really what to expect."

— Eric Crouch

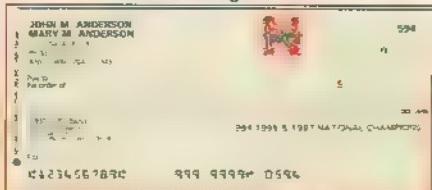
of the offense and being able to interact with the players and not going out there timid in calling plays," said Alexander. "Even though he's younger than a lot of people out there, he's the boss."

Crouch was the boss last year when he was in the game. But it's different now ■

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Football in Finley's Blood

High school coach's son recalls heated rivalries in home state

Clint Finley misses several things about his home state of Texas.

He misses his family. He misses hunting and fishing with friends. And he misses the weather.

He also misses the people. Texans "are pretty much outgoing," he said.

"You can talk to a total stranger down there, strike up some conversation."

"The people up here are a little bit less likely to talk to you if they don't know you. They're good people, no doubt about it. They just have a little different way of showing it."

Texans are friendly. They are, that is, "until it comes to football," said Finley.

"When it comes to football, it's all business."

He repeated himself for emphasis. "All business," he said.

Consider the rivalry between his high school in Cuero and the high school in Yoakum, which is located just a couple of first downs to the north, up Alternate Highway 77.

Cuero High's athletic teams are nicknamed the Gobblers, and when the team went to Yoakum to play, it was greeted by dead turkeys hanging from an overpass on the way into town.

"Busses got rocked, that sort of thing," Finley said.

"And we had to be escorted out of town."

"You've got towns that literally don't like each other because of football. When a basketball game or something like that is won, it's always a good comeback to say: 'Well, we beat you in football.' They can't say a word, and they know it. That's just how important football is down there."

And that's why Finley picked Nebraska. Football was too important to go anywhere else.

"I had to choose to come here to play for the two-time defending national champions at the time," he said. "You'd be crazy to pass that up."



Nebraska sophomore Randy Stella returns a kickoff against California.

when football means as much as it does to me.

"Growing up with it, football has been really important to me."

Finley's father, Mickey, was his football coach at Cuero High. Now, he's in his first season as the head coach at Arlington High, in the greater Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Football "is in my blood," Clint Finley said. "That's what I've done. That's what I've known since I was a little bitty kid. Ever since I could walk, I was out being a tee boy or a ball boy or whatever on the sideline. So it's a dream come true to be able to do this right here."

The Cornhuskers' junior free safety, the Texas high school Class 3A player of the year as a senior, was recruited by all of the NCAA Division IA programs in the state.

Texas A&M had the inside track until Nebraska entered the picture.

"I thought I was going to be an Aggie from the time I was a sophomore," he said. "They paid a lot of attention to me since (the time) I was real young. They're a classy program." He also made a recruiting visit to Texas.

"But as far as being an Aggie or a Longhorn all my life, it wasn't that way. I never really got into that," he said. "I always rooted for the Texas teams, but it wasn't a big deal, where I was a die-hard Aggie or Longhorn. So I didn't feel any obligation to go to either of those schools."

His friends accepted his decision, and most "are Cornhusker fans now," Finley said. "But a lot of people down there (in Cuero) aren't. A lot are die-hard Aggies or Longhorns."

"And the last thing they want to see is their teams losing." Folks who are otherwise friendly don't take kindly to that. ■



Huskers Illustrated

Team of the Decade, 1970-79

Offense

TE	Junior Miller (1977-78-79)
End	Guy Ingles (1968-69-70)
Line	Daryl White (1971-72-73)
Line	Marvin Crenshaw (1972-73-74)
Line	Rik Bonness (1973-74-75)
Line	Kelvin Clark (1976-77-78)
Line	Bob Newton (1969-70)
QB	Jerry Tagge (1969-70-71)
IB	Jeff Kinney (1969-70-71)
FB	Tony Davis (1973-74-75)
WB	Johnny Rodgers (1970-71-72)
Kicker	Rich Sanger (1971-72-73)

Defense

End	Willie Harper (1970-71-72)
End	Bob Martin (1973-74-75)
Line	Rich Glover (1970-71-72)
Line	Larry Jacobson (1969-70-71)
Line	John Dutton (1971-72-73)
LB	Jerry Murtaugh (1968-69-70)
LB	Lee Kunz (1976-77-78)
Back	Wonder Monds (1973-74-75)
Back	Dave Butterfield (1974-75-76)
Back	Bill Kosch (1969-70-71)
Back	Jim Pillen (1976-77-78)
Punter	Tim Smith (1977-78-79)

Johnny Rodgers opened the scoring in the "Game of the Century" against Oklahoma in 1971, with a 72-yard punt return for a touchdown.

Rodgers Caps Career By Doing It All in Bowl

Receiving section of Husker record book still belongs to 1972 Heisman winner

By Mike Babcock

"I said they could put me anywhere they wanted and I'd get the job done."

Johnny Rodgers

(following the 1973 Orange Bowl game)

The second quarter of Nebraska's 45-0 victory against California this season belonged to Eric Crouch. The sophomore quarterback from Omaha ran for a touchdown. He passed to tight end

TEAMS OF THE DECADE

Seventh
in a series
(1970-79)

Tracey Wistrom for a touchdown. And he caught a pass from Bobby Newcombe for a touchdown.

Crouch's performance initiated a search for the last time a major college football player had rushed for a touchdown, passed for a touchdown and

caught a touchdown pass in the same game.

The date was Jan. 1, 1973. And the player was Nebraska's Johnny Rodgers.

Rodgers, who had been presented the Heisman Trophy less than a month earlier, accomplished the rare feat in the Cornhuskers' 40-6 victory against Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl game.

He ran 8 yards for a touchdown in the first quarter. He took a pitchout from quarterback Dave Humm and passed to split end Frosty Anderson for a touchdown, on a play that covered 52 yards, in the second quarter. And he caught a Humm pass for a 50-yard touchdown in the third quarter.

Rodgers also scored touchdowns on runs of 3 and 5 yards in the third quarter to finish his Cornhusker career in appropriate fashion. Nebraska has never had a more explosive offensive player.

Nebraska also has never had a kick

returner to equal Rodgers. "Once you've been around a Johnny Rodgers, it's all kind of downhill after that in my lifetime," former Cornhusker assistant Jim Walden told the Associated Press during his tenure as head coach at Iowa State.

Nebraska's 1971 team often has been described as the best in major college history. It had a "good offense and a great defense," former Cornhusker head coach Tom Osborne once said.

But "as great as that team was, take Johnny Rodgers out of there on kickoff and punt returns and it probably wouldn't have gone 13-0. He did an awful lot for the kicking game."

Rodgers averaged 15.46 yards and scored seven touchdowns on 98 punt returns during his career, with his most memorable coming in the "Game of the Century" at Oklahoma in 1971.

Ten members of the all-decade team for the 1970s played in that game. In addition to Rodgers, they included: Jerry Tagge, Jeff Kinney, Daryl White, Willie Harper, Larry Jacobson, John Dutton, Bill Kosch, Rich Sanger and Rich Glover, who was involved in 22 tackles.

Rodgers also did an awful lot for Nebraska's passing game, which was the best in the Big Eight Conference in 1971 and 1972, when it set a school record by averaging 221 yards per game.

The receiving section of the Cornhusker record book belongs to him. He has, far and away, the most pass receptions and receiving yards in school history — 143 and 2,479, respectively.

His 55 receptions for 942 yards in 1972 are school records. And his 53 receptions for 872 yards in 1971 rank second on those lists (His 665 receiving yards in 1970 rank fourth.)

He holds the single-season and career records for touchdown receptions, 11 in 1971 and 26 total. He caught passes for 100 or more yards in 10 games during his career. He caught at least one pass in 34 consecutive games. And he caught touchdown passes in five consecutive games.

He ranks second in career touchdowns, with 45, and third in scoring, with 270 points.

Rodgers might never have been a Cornhusker, however, if Southern California had offered him a scholarship. "That's where I wanted to go," Rodgers once said.

"If USC hadn't backed off, there probably wouldn't have been anything anybody could have done. There wouldn't have been much Coach (Bob)

Devaney could have said.

"Nebraska wasn't like it is now. Southern Cal was like what Nebraska is."

The Trojans won the national championship in 1967 and finished second to Ohio State in the United Press International rankings (they were fourth in the Associated Press poll) in 1968. They also won the national title in 1962 and finished in the Top 10 two other times in the mid-1960s.

Southern California coach John McKay considered Rodgers too small for a running back, however, and that's the position he wanted to play. So with encouragement from Mike Green and Dick Davis, Omaha athletes

who also played for the Cornhuskers, Rodgers came to Nebraska.

Osborne was his position coach, and contributed to his success as much as anyone, Rodgers has said. "Coach Osborne was my man. We did a lot of things together. We'd run together after practice."

"He'd throw me passes. Tom threw pretty well. He wanted to throw it, and he could throw all types of passes. That's how I was able to catch those 'ducks' Tagge used to throw."

Osborne "drilled you and drilled you and drilled you," said Rodgers.

"He would work from sun-up to sundown. He stayed after practice with me every single day, throwing turnarounds and horseshoes. I did as

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much after practice as I did during it." Osborne served as Devaney's offensive coordinator and "created the pro offense and the spread," Rodgers has said. "He was the man. And we used it. He was always rather intense."

Then as now, Nebraska's offensive success depended on execution.

"The 1970 and 1971 teams never made mistakes," said Rodgers. "We had no it so many times. We didn't really have very many plays. We just gave people a whole lot of looks

"We ran a few screens and quick reverses. We threw a lot more than they do now, and we didn't throw much then. My favorite play was the inside reverse, fake the option."

Even though he played wingback at Nebraska, he still had the mindset of a running back, the position he played, much to Notre Dame's surprise, in the 1973 Orange Bowl game

"I always told them I wanted to do that," Rodgers said. "I can't say who cleared it, probably Bob (Devaney) because he was the head coach. But Tom (Osborne) was the offensive coordinator. I think I would have gotten the running back call more if Tom had

been the coach

"He would have come out of the gate a little differently."

Rodgers lined up at I-back and took a pitchout from Humm on the game's first play from scrimmage, gaining 13 yards and setting the tone for what was to follow.

He came up short of his goal of rushing for 100 yards, finishing with 81. "Man, that's tough to get 100 yards rushing," he said afterward. "I've really got respect for those dudes that go 100 yards in a game." ■

Rich Glover (right) was an All-America middle guard in 1972. He won the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award in 1972, giving Nebraska the first back-to-back Outland sweep (defensive tackle Larry Jacobson won it in 1971), a feat that would be accomplished again a decade later by center Dave Rimington and guard Dean Steinkuhler.

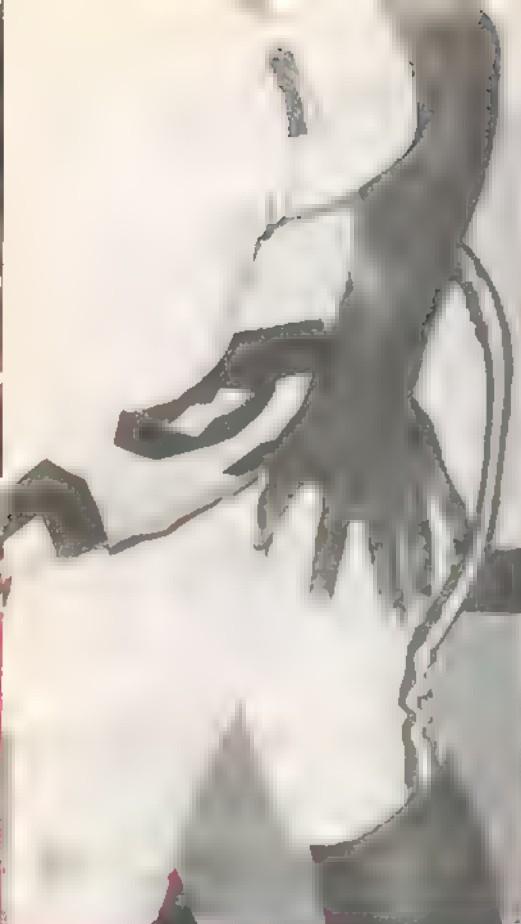


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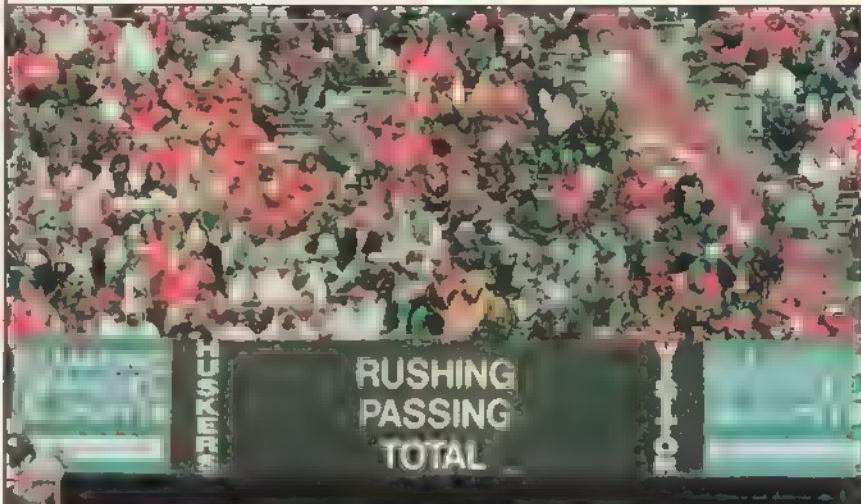
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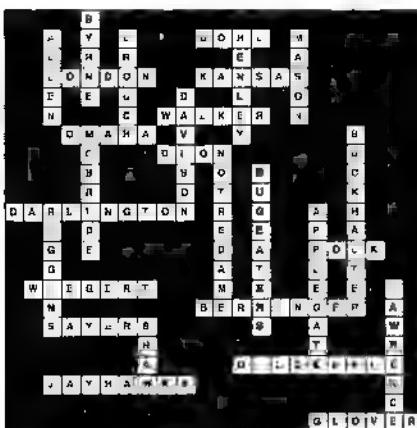
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 13 A&M's '98 Lombardi Award winner
 16 1983 Heisman Trophy winner
 17 Texas A&M nickname
 20 NU's leading tackler
 22 Texas A&M location
 24 NU's No. 19
 25 NU's first bowl victory
 26 Leading tackler vs. A&M in 1998

DOWN

- 1 1983 Lombardi Award winner
 3 Jon Vedral's younger brother
 5 Leading receiver vs. A&M in 1998
 6 A&M's only Heisman winner (1957)
 8 NU's No. 81
 10 A&M's previous head coach
 12 NU's No. 15

CROSSWORD



- 14 NU strength coach
 15 NU's No. 96
 16 NU's No. 54
 18 NU coach in 1961

- 19 NU's leading scorer
 21 NU rush ends coach
 23 NU quarterback coach
 Answers in Nov. 13 issue

This Week in Husker History

October 31

1959 — Trick or treat. Ron Meade intercepts a pass to end Oklahoma's final bid for a touchdown as Nebraska ends the Sooners' 74-game conference unbeaten streak in what many consider the greatest upset in Cornhusker history, 25-21 at Memorial Stadium. Meade also kicks two field goals in the game on Halloween. Guard Lee Zentic scores a touchdown on a 36-yard return of a shanked punt.

November 1

1975 — John O'Leary runs 40 yards for a touchdown on the "Bummeroosky" as Coach Tom Osborne gets his first victory, in three tries, against Missouri, 30-7 at Columbia. Quarterback Vince Ferragamo completes 8-of-17 passes for 136 yards and three touchdowns.

November 2

1998 — After a scoreless first quarter, Nebraska scores 52 points before Oklahoma can get on the scoreboard in a

73-21 victory at Norman. The meeting is the first between the long-time rivals as members of the Big 12 Conference. Scott Frost completes 10-of-22 passes for 163 yards and three touchdowns.

November 3

1962 — Nebraska's continuing NCAA-record of 231 consecutive sellouts at Memorial Stadium begins with a 16-7 Homecoming loss against Missouri in Bob Devaney's first season as the Cornhuskers' head coach. The loss is Devaney's first at Nebraska. Attendance is 36,000.

November 4

1995 — Nebraska scores on its first 10 possessions and 11 of 13 total in a 73-14 victory against Iowa State at Memorial Stadium. Quarterback Tommie Frazier completes 10-of-15 passes for 118 yards and two touchdowns to surpass Dave Humm for career touchdown passes. Frazier also rushes for two touchdowns to break Steve Taylor's career

record for touchdowns by a quarterback.

November 5

1983 — Mike Rozier rushes for 212 yards and four touchdowns and Turner Gill completes 13-of-24 passes for 241 yards and three touchdowns in a 72-29 victory against Iowa State. Rozier's four touchdowns give him 24 for the season, breaking the conference single-season record set by Oklahoma's Steve Owens in 1969. Rozier also breaks the Nebraska career record, held by Johnny Rodgers.

November 6

1993 — Nebraska's undefeated regular season is preserved when a two-point conversion attempt by Kansas with 52 seconds remaining fails. The Cornhuskers escape Memorial Stadium in Lawrence with a 21-20 victory. Calvin Jones, who rushes for 195 yards and one touchdown, sets up the winning touchdown with a 51-yard run. The game-winner comes on a pass from Tommie Frazier to Trumane Bell. ■

'We Were the Pioneers'

Ivy led Huskers to conference title, first NCAA berth

Maurice Ivy hasn't attended many Nebraska women's basketball games since she completed her career as a Husker in 1988. But that might be changing.

The second-leading scorer in school history is more comfortable now.

"I think I had to grow up a little bit," she said.

No longer being in the spotlight was difficult. "It was hard for me to go back down there and watch because my identity was changing," said Ivy. "It was different. It was a transition for me."

Ivy left Nebraska as the career-scoring leader with 2,131 points and a 19.2 points-per-game average. She was the Huskers' first three-time, first-team all-conference selection and their first conference player of the year, an award she earned as a senior after leading Nebraska to its first conference title.

That team finished with a 22-7 record and went to the NCAA Tournament for the first time, success that is becoming an annual expectation under third-year head coach Paul Sanderford.

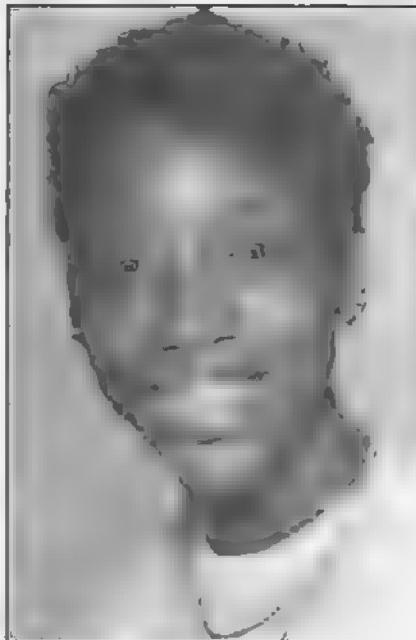
"I knew we were the pioneers," Ivy said.

Had it been her decision, however, Ivy wouldn't have played at Nebraska following an outstanding career at Omaha Central High School -- which was 50-0 during her junior and senior seasons.

Not surprisingly, she attracted recruiting attention from schools all over the country.

"There were 255 colleges recruiting me," she said. "I didn't realize there were so many colleges. And I could have gone anywhere, Tennessee, Georgia, any of the top five or 10."

Nebraska had enjoyed moderate success in the program's 10 seasons before Ivy arrived. But the national powers in women's basketball were schools such as Tennessee and



Maurice Ivy was Nebraska's first three-time, first-team all-conference selection.

Louisiana Tech.

And those were the teams "I followed," Ivy said.

"Nebraska is a football state. And some of the other sports got overlooked. But my family wanted me to stay close to home. They're die-hard Nebraska fans. That's why I stayed."

The support of her parents, who are "still my No. 1 fans," was essential to her success. And they persuaded her to become a Husker. They believed the program could become "dominant," she said. "My dad told me: 'You make it that way. You help make it a program people respect.'

"I did it for my family, and it impacted the state. We established the program."

The Huskers improved in each of her four seasons, going 10-18, 11-17 and 16-13 before the breakout season under Coach Angela Beck, who succeeded Kelly Hill in 1986.

Initially, Ivy wasn't happy with the coaching change, in part because Hill had recruited her. "I had a problem with that," Ivy said. "In the middle of my career, we have a coaching change."

Eventually, however, she came to accept it.

Beck's competitiveness reflected her own, which was shaped by competing against boys and practicing on outdoor courts in a city park

25 YEARS

of Women's Athletics

In celebration of 25 years of women's athletics at Nebraska, Huskers Illustrated is featuring stories with Husker women student-athletes from the late 1970s and 1980s, remembering the way things were and discussing how things have changed.

across the street from her home.

"We played basketball 24/7," said Ivy. "If I hadn't had a curfew, I would have slept in that park."

She began playing basketball when she was 6-years-old, at the North Branch YMCA, in a program directed by Forrest Roper, "a great man, a great pioneer," Ivy said.

"That's when it all started. He had the best talent in Omaha."

Ivy's name appears throughout the Husker record book. She is first in free throws made (431) and ranks in the top 10 in rebounds, rebounding average, field goal percentage, steals and assists.

She scored 30 or more points seven times, with a high of 46.

She now works with youngsters in Omaha and sponsors an annual, late-July, three-on-three basketball tournament, which bears her name, in an effort to "do something for the community," she said.

She no longer plays basketball competitively, however, walking away after an unsuccessful tryout with the Utah team in the WNBA a year ago. She made it to the final cut.

That was as good of a time as any to end her playing career. Her knees were bothering her, and she realized she needed to step aside. "I had to put some closure to it," she said. "And I have."

"I'm still a competitor, though. I've been playing golf, trying to elevate that."

She's also considering attending some Nebraska games because she has some perspective.

"I'm a product of this state," Ivy said. "I can say that now."

When she was playing, however, "I hadn't put that together yet," she said. ■



Amber Holmquist is spending a lot less time on the sidelines since becoming a part of the regular rotation on Oct. 2.

Steady Progress

Freshman Holmquist justifies coach's confidence, cracks starting lineup

By Todd Henrichs

From the first day she stepped on campus at Nebraska, Amber Holmquist has charted her progress with the Huskers' volleyball team.

And with the 6-foot-4 freshman from Houston now in the starting lineup, Husker fans can keep a close eye on Holmquist as well.

Holmquist cracked the regular rotation Oct. 2 at Texas A&M and hasn't given up any of the playing time she said was her goal this season. Holmquist started every match in NU's recent five-match winning streak and her play is beginning to catch the eye of opponents who have concentrated almost solely on the Huskers' Nancy Meendering this season.

Holmquist said she hasn't been nervous, mostly because she sees in practice what her potential is and what the capabilities are of this Husker team. At 15-5 and 7-3, Nebraska was lurking around the top of the Big 12 Conference standings and in the top 15 of the national polls.

"There was a point in practice where I was getting more confident every day," Holmquist said. "Then there was a point where I was confident I could improve the team. My focus is to work hard in practice every day and make the team better."

Holmquist might be sitting out a redshirt season if Coach Terry Pettit hadn't caught a glimpse of her potential early on. She had played sparingly before displacing two-year starter Tonia Tauke from the lineup. Nebraska's eight-person rotation now includes three freshmen: Holmquist, Greichaly Cepero and setter Lindsay Wischmeier.

"One of the reasons we didn't red-shirt any of the freshmen was we couldn't tell you what ones would be on the court, but I think I've coached long enough to know that someone was going to develop," Pettit said. "I just wanted to be open to that."

Tauke has played extensively in her NU career but this season is averaging only 1.79 kills per game compared to 2.39 a year ago. Holmquist is averaging 1.57 kills but has shown the ability to be a more dominant offensive player.

Her hitting percentage is a team-best .414, a mark which would rank second nationally if Holmquist had the minimum number of attempts this season. Her mark of 1.61 blocks per game approaches the 1.64 mark of

Tauke that ranks No. 5 in the nation.

Numbers aside, Pettit said Holmquist has shown the ability in practice to do even greater things.

"Amber has dominated practice for the last month," Pettit said. "She's given that indication that she's ready to be out there and play."

Gaining her first start in front of friends and family at Texas A&M was special, Holmquist said. And when the Huskers went to Baylor a week later, Holmquist dazzled those followers with a terrific performance.

Holmquist hit .533, producing nine kills on 15 attacks with only one. She had a hand in seven of the Huskers' 13 blocks error in NU's three-game victory. After watching the videotape, Pettit called it the best performance a freshman middle blocker at NU has ever had.

Pettit believes Holmquist has the potential to average three to five kills per game and gives Nebraska more of a physical look in its lineup. Meendering ranks among the most dynamic attackers in the nation but can't get the job done alone.

"Amber's just a different kind of presence," Pettit said. "She has a very fast arm swing, and if the middle block goes over and commits on Meendering or even leans that way, it opens up something for Amber."

"And as teams realize how good (Amber) is, it will open up things for Nancy."

Holmquist joined the Huskers after starting for the U.S. Junior National Team that reached the World Championships in Canada this summer. Since cracking the lineup at Nebraska, Holmquist has continued to improve in practice.

"Sometimes a new player will win a starting position, look up after two or three matches and say 'What am I doing here? It was easier to compete for this spot when I didn't have it,'" Pettit said. "But she hasn't done that. She's kind of put daylight between her and other people."

The other freshmen have continued to play well, and Pettit believes it's only a matter of time before Laura Pilakowski makes an impact. Together, the group's goal is to someday win a national title, something Pettit says isn't out of the question.

"These are the type of athletes that can help us," Pettit said. "I've never had three freshmen on the floor... but I really believe that the freshmen at some point are going to be on a team that wins the national championship."

"This freshman class is flat out the best class we've ever had." ■



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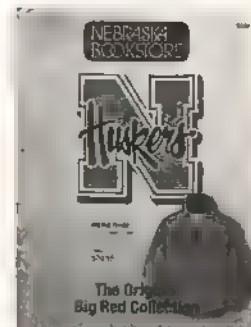
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Still Not Perfect

Sophomore Anderson is her own biggest critic

By Steve Sipple

Meghan Anderson was deep into her perfectionist mode. She was talking about how she needed to be more of a dominant presence in the midfield for the Nebraska women's soccer team. And about how she needed to improve her defense, and her one-on-one play, and her aerial attacks (heading).

She would have kept going if practice weren't about to begin.

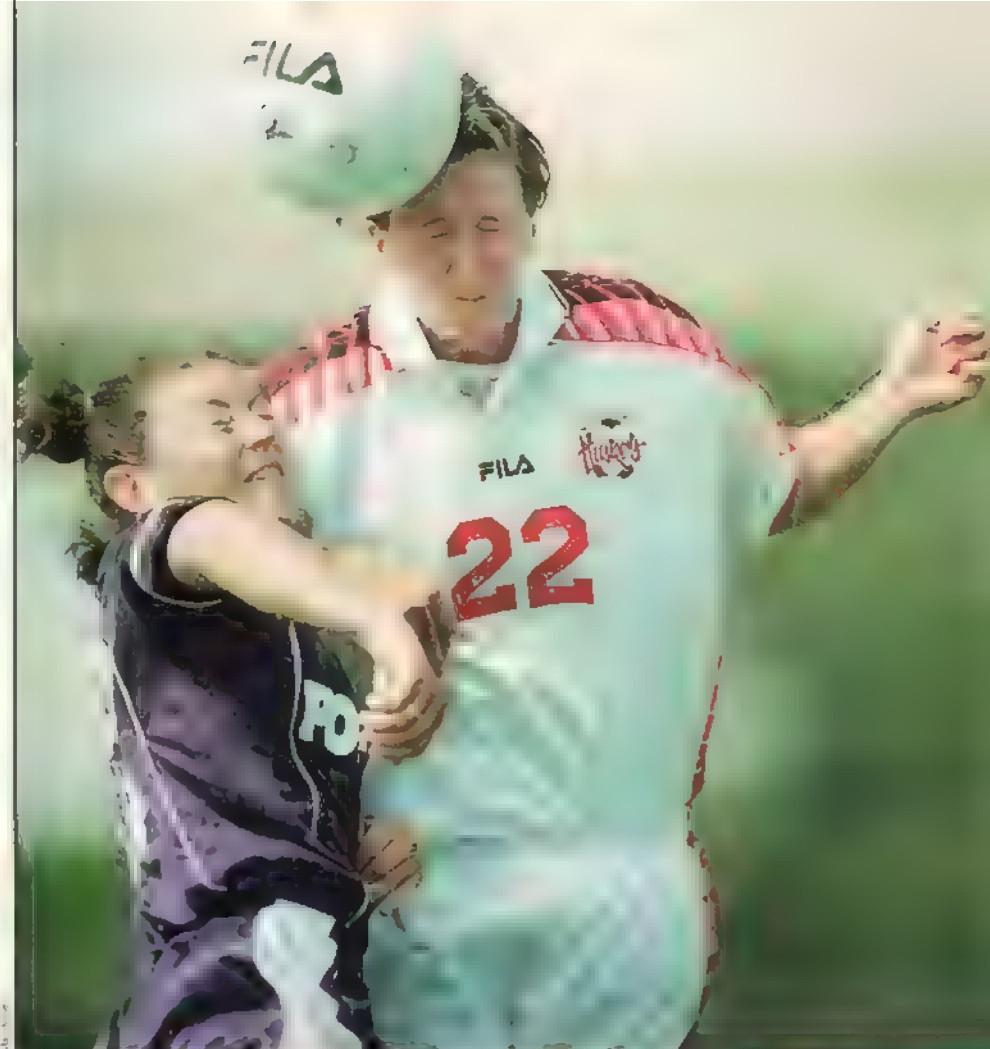
"I'm very hard on myself," admitted the 5-foot-7 sophomore from Omaha, Neb.

Never mind that Anderson had scored 19 points on seven goals and five assists in the last four matches. Or that her 41 points (16 goals, 9 assists) were tops for a fourth-ranked Husker squad that was preparing for its regular-season finale Oct. 29 against Iowa State. Or that only three other Huskers in the program's six-year history had scored 40-plus points in a season.

"I'm a perfectionist," Anderson said.

While she might not be perfect, Anderson undeniably has been a key cog in a Nebraska soccer machine that has clinched the Big 12 Conference regular-season title and the No. 1 seed in the eight-team conference tournament Nov. 3-6 in San Antonio, Texas. Anderson's scoring prowess has actually surprised Husker head coach John Walker, whose squad was 16-1-1 overall and 9-0-0 in the league entering its regular-season finale.

"Meghan's just really explosive," Walker said. "It's certainly rare for a



Nebraska sophomore Meghan Anderson (22) makes an aerial attack while battling a Portland defender earlier this season.

central midfielder to score that much."

Last season Anderson played on the flank — a wide midfielder — and established herself as one of the best young talents in the Big 12. She ranked fourth on the team in scoring with 19 points (five goals, nine assists) while starting all 22 contests.

With junior Jenny Benson back from a knee injury that sidelined her all of last season, Anderson moved from the flank to central midfield. Walker discussed the move with Anderson right after last season, hoping the change would add offensive firepower in the middle of the field. Walker's hopes have been realized, and then some.

Anderson says the change in positions is like "night and day." On the flank, she says, there are more one-on-one opportunities. In the central midfield, she said, there is more constant movement and more plays come through her area. Most of her points now come from long-range blasts.

The Omaha Burke High School graduate has been particularly strong down the stretch. She racked up 10 points on four goals and two assists

during a mid-October homestand against Kansas and No. 18 Missouri.

She then tallied nine points (three goals, three assists) in road wins Oct. 22 against Oklahoma and Oct. 24 against Oklahoma State. The Huskers clinched the league crown with their 3-1 triumph against the Sooners, with Anderson scoring the game-winning goal after assisting fellow Burke graduate Becky Preston on the first goal.

Preston and Anderson grew up together and began playing soccer together in junior high. Entering the Iowa State match, the 5-foot-6 Preston has eight points on three goals and two assists.

The hard-to-please Anderson says she won't be satisfied this season unless Nebraska reaches the NCAA Final Four. The Huskers have made back-to-back Sweet 16 appearances after reaching the Elite Eight in 1996. Anderson hopes NU's regular-season success this year, coupled with a Big 12 Tournament crown, will land it home-field advantage until the Final Four Dec. 3-5 in San Jose, Calif.

"We play a lot better at home than we do away," she said. ■

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Nebraska Good Fit for All-America Offensive Lineman

Texan Povendo says he's always been a Husker fan

By James Hale

At this time of year, Nebraska always seems to be involved in two title chases.

The first, and most important, is the one on the field where Nebraska is battling for the Big 12 Conference title.

On the recruiting front, the Cornhuskers are in a similar race.

Nebraska always recruits well enough to be one of the finest classes in the country, and the Huskers are always at the forefront of the early commitment chase as well.

Penn State already has 26 commitment, and that controversial situation has the college football world buzzing. Meanwhile, Nebraska continues at its steady and brisk pace with a model of efficiency.

Nebraska earned its 13th oral commitment recently, when offensive lineman Nick Povendo (6-foot-5 and 285 pounds, with 5.1 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Keller, Texas, gave his word to sign a letter of intent in February.

Povendo is the fourth offensive lineman to commit to the Huskers early, allowing Nebraska to already fill one of its biggest recruiting needs. Nebraska needed offensive linemen in this class, and with four in the class before November, the Huskers can now be very selective if they want a fifth. If a great one doesn't come along, then they are perfectly satisfied with what they have.

Povendo is a preseason All-American with excellent size and enough quickness to play soccer on his school's soccer his freshman and sophomore years.

"I think Nick is a rare player, because you just don't find big men like him that are as quick and agile," said Keller Head Coach Ken Mizell. "He's cat quick with his first couple of steps, with great feet, and the first blow that he delivers is really something."

Povendo has everything that Nebraska looks for in an offensive lineman — size, quickness, and he is a regional powerlifting champion as well. In a seemingly perfect match, Nebraska has everything that Povendo needs in a college.

"My ACT score hasn't come back yet, so I can't take visits yet, but I



Nick Povendo of Keller, Texas, was the fourth lineman to commit to Nebraska.

know that Nebraska has everything that I am looking for in a college," Povendo said. "I have always been a Nebraska fan, and I love to watch how they just pound people. They just crush teams, and that is amazing."

"To get a scholarship offer from Nebraska is an offensive lineman's dream. If they want you as an offensive lineman, you know that you are one of the very best in the country. They have sent a number of offensive linemen to the pros, and that tells you all you need to know right there."

Povendo picked the Huskers over TCU, Mississippi, Syracuse, Purdue and Oklahoma.

Now, we'll switch gears to the other side of the football.

Nebraska has such a hybrid defense that it's always difficult to discuss who they are recruiting at linebacker. They don't always recruit prep linebackers

Nebraska Commitments for 2000

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Jake Andersen	Denver (Mullen)	6-2	305	OL
Thunder Collins	Los Angeles (East L.A. College)	6-2	210	IB
Ira Cooper	Omaha (Westside), Neb.	6-1 1/2	220	LB
Sandro DeAngelis	Buffalo, N.Y. (St. Joseph Coll.)	5-9	195	FB/K
Mike Erickson	Papillion (Papillion-LaVista), Neb.	6-4	260	OL
Martin Flaurm	Denver (Northglenn), Colo.	6-5	280	OL
Steve Kriewald	North Loup-Scotia	5-11	260	FB
DeWayne Long Jr.	West Des Moines (Dowling) Iowa	6-1	205	RB
Lornell McPherson	Omaha (Central), Neb.	5-11	175	DB/WB
Ross Pilkington	Loveland, Colo.	6-1	175	WR
Josh Plisch	Rothschild, Wis.	6-4	290	OL
Nick Povendo	Keller, Texas	6-5	285	OG
Jason Richenberger	Liberty, Mo.	6-3	210	LB
Chris Septak	Millard (West), Neb	6-4	235	TE

to play linebacker for them, many times recruiting big prep safeties to convert to linebackers. However, we will write about safeties later, so for the sake of tradition, we have found several prototype linebackers that the Nebraska has its eye on.

The Huskers already have two outstanding linebackers committed to their program. Jason Richenberger (6-3, 210, 4.55) of Liberty, Mo., is a pre-season All-American who is having a banner year. Liberty is 6-1, mainly because of the play of Richenberger, who has 60 tackles, four sacks, four tackles for losses, two fumble recoveries and one interception return for a 43-yard touchdown.

"I am really proud of the season that we are having right now," Richenberger said. "I don't play much in the second half because we are usually so far ahead at halftime. Nebraska is having a pretty good season, and I am fired up about it. I hope both teams can win a championship."

There was some thought recently that Richenberger was going to take two visits to other colleges to make sure he was making the right decision. Those rumors can now be put to rest, as he now says Nebraska will be the only school that he visits this fall.

Ira Cooper (6-1, 220, 4.7) of Omaha (Westside), Neb., is having a banner year on both sides of the ball. Cooper is still projected as a linebacker at Nebraska, but he's a 1,000 yard rusher on offense, and it wouldn't be a shock if he winds up at fullback in Lincoln.

Aurmon Satchell (6-3, 220, 4.6) of Denver (Jefferson) may be the best inside linebacker prospect in the country. He has everything you look for in an inside backer, plus an attitude that separates him from most of the rest.

"I think Aurmon is one of the finest linebackers in the country," Jefferson Coach Tim Cross said. "I just can't imagine that there is a better linebacker than him out there. He just makes plays all over the field for us, and it doesn't matter if it is defending the run game or the pass, he is there to make the spot."

Satchell is averaging 13 tackles a game through seven games this season, with four sacks, three passes broken up. He returned an interception 79 yards for a score. There is no question that Texas is the early leader, but Nebraska, USC, Colorado and Michigan will get their shot.

"I like the speed that Nebraska plays with on defense," Satchell said. "They have great talent at every single position on defense, and they are good every year. They swarm to the ball on

Many Quarterbacks Committing Early

It's always interesting to follow recruiting trends and see where they are taking us as we enter a new century. Recruiting is faster paced, and there is more urgency involved with early commitments than ever before. Teams are making decisions on athletes before they even play their senior year, at times getting commitments from half a class this way.

There almost seems to be a state of panic for schools to get commitments from quarterbacks. In one respect football is the same in 1999 as it was back in the 1950s, in that a team must have a quality quarterback to win and be successful. With the position being so important, schools across the country are offering quarterbacks even before their junior years are over.

Florida State was the first to do this last year, when as soon as signing day was over, Chris Rix of LaPuente, Calif., announced that he was going to be a Seminole. Rix is regarded as one of the five quarterbacks in the country, and already Florida State had a major edge in recruiting for the year 2000 with his commitment. The kid hadn't even finished his junior year of school, and already he was as Seminole.

Every recruiting expect has his or her own top 20 at every position, and in mine, 12 of the top 20 quarterbacks in the country have already cast their lot with some major college program.

The nation's top quarterback, Brock Berlin of Evangel (Christian), La., recently committed to Florida. Jeff Smoker of Manheim (Central), Pa., committed to Michigan State, when Penn State's Joe Paterno refused him a scholarship when Smoker didn't commit early enough.

Chance Mock of The Woodlands, Texas, committed back in the summer to Texas, despite the fact the Longhorns signed the nation's top rated prep signal caller last year in Chris Simms. Casey Clausen of Mission Hills (Alamany), Calif., is another top-five quarterback already committed to Tennessee.

James Campbell of Taylorsville, Miss., is the only top-five quarterback that is keeping his options open. Craig Ochs of Boulder (Fairview), Colo., is another top-10 quarterback who is still looking. Andrew Walters of Grand Junction, Colo., told Arizona State back in the summer he was coming their way. He was the Sun Devils' first commitment.

Matt LoVecchio of Bergen Catholic, N.J., is headed to Notre Dame, Zac Wasserman of Westlake Village, Calif., to Penn State and Brandon Hance of Los Angeles (Taft) is going to pass happy Purdue. Wasserman took Paterno's offer early and is the reason why Smoker didn't get a Nittany Lion scholarship.

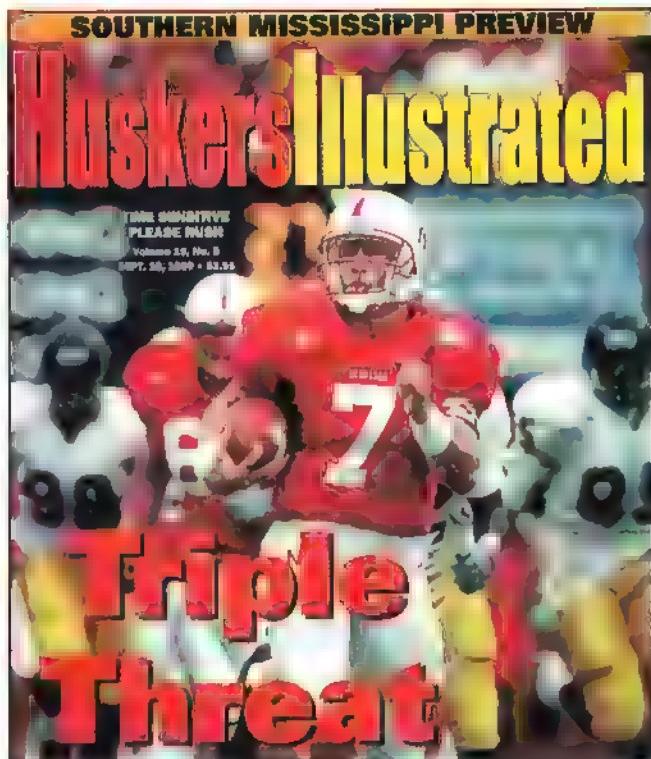
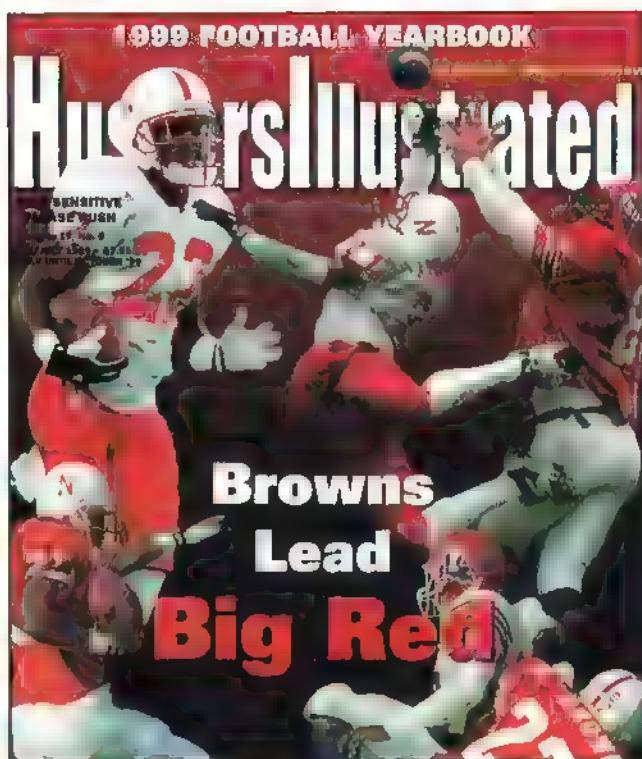
John Rattay of Phoenix (Desert Vista) is the second top-20 quarterback to commit to Tennessee. It's amazing that Tennessee can have two early commitments from top quarterbacks. Only one quarterback can play at a time, and out of all the positions on the field, quarterbacks seem to evaluate who is at their position and who schools are recruiting before making a decision. They want to be the man and don't want a lot of competition for it.

Derrick Crudup Jr. of Deerfield Beach, Fla., is headed to Auburn, and Matt Cassell of Van Nuys (Chatsworth), Calif., is going to USC.

That leaves Kenny Irby of Woodbridge (Hylton), Md., Aaron Alston of Durham (Riverside), N.C., Luke McCown of Jacksonville, Texas, Timmy Chang of Honolulu (St. Louis) and Brandon Summer of Daytona Beach (Mainland), Fla., as top-20 quarterbacks who have not committed.

Those are quality quarterbacks, but the pickings are slim. Some schools may be getting worried. Not Nebraska, however. There wasn't a great run/pass QB on the board early, so the Cornhuskers have taken their time finding a quarterback they want to recruit. Brandon Hassell (6-1, 195, 4.45) of Arlington (Houston), Texas has emerged as an athletic quarterback who is looking at the Cornhuskers. Hassell says Nebraska is his top choice early, with Colorado, Syracuse, Baylor and Memphis also on his list. ■

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every play and chase the ball as well as any team in the country. They blitz just enough to keep it interesting, and they just dominate in every game."

John Garrett (6-2, 215, 4.5) of Mart, Texas, is a combination of rage and athletic ability on the field. Garrett doubles as a fullback and tackle-happy linebacker. As a fullback, he is good, but not necessarily a difference maker, but at linebacker it is a different story.

A year ago, Garrett made 184 tackles and earned first team All-State honors. His 360-pound bench press and 500-pound squat, along with his sprinter speed make him almost too good to be true. Blessed with the speed to play safety, Garrett is an excellent pass defender and a few colleges toy with the idea of playing him at safety.

Texas currently has a slight lead over Nebraska, with Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Kansas and Baylor also in the hunt.

"I am trying to keep my options open throughout the season," Garrett said. "I will take my visits after the season, and then I will get a real good look at Nebraska. I know from watching them on television that they have a great defense and a great program, and I feel I could really fit in with what they try to do."

Derek Curry (6-4, 230, 4.8) of Sealy, Texas, is another preseason All-American showing interest in the Huskers. Nebraska has only an outside shot with Curry, but the three-year starter on a defending state championship squad is still keeping an open mind between Notre Dame (favorite), BYU, Texas A&M, LSU, Nebraska, USC, Texas Tech and Arkansas.

In California, Tyler Kruse (6-1, 220, 4.6) of Santa Ana (Mater Dei) is a top-100 talent. A very physical presence, Kruse has six sacks on the season and is averaging seven tackles per game. Kruse admits he is trying to keep an open mind about recruiting and is still considering Washington State, Arizona, Ohio State and Nebraska.

Eric Rapley (6-2, 230, 4.7) of Trabuco Hills, Calif., is another top-100 talent. Through six games, Rapley has 59 tackles, two fumble recoveries, six sacks and six tackles for losses. Rapley has just now started to work on setting visits, and Ohio State, Arizona, Oregon, Iowa, Wisconsin and Nebraska are the schools he is considering.

Kelvin Travis (6-0, 219, 4.5) of Detroit (Cass), Mich., is another to keep your eye on. Travis is looking at Michigan, Ohio State, Nebraska, UCLA, Illinois and Michigan. ■

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Different Pattern, Same Result

*Huskers make adjustments,
play well enough in second half to win*



**Mike
BABCOCK**

SO KANSAS was supposed to be good for what ailed Nebraska.

And why not? The oldest continuous series in NCAA Division IA has been a trail of tears for the Jayhawks the past 30 years. There might have been some tears this time. But they would have been tears of frustration rather than of the futility that has characterized most of 30 consecutive losses.

Nine of those 30 Kansas losses came after the Cornhuskers had lost. And so it was this time.

The result was the same. Nebraska won 24-17 at Lawrence, on a pleasant October evening at the foot of Mount Oread. The difference was, Kansas came away thinking it could have won.

And that it should have won.

"I don't remember in years past that during Nebraska week we even talked about beating Nebraska," Kansas Coach Terry Allen said earlier in the week.

"Now, we've got kids talking about it. I'm pleased with that."

Kansas thinking it could beat Nebraska? The Cornhuskers had won the previous 10 games by a combined 446-100. And Kansas hadn't scored in 10 consecutive quarters.

The situation was unusual, to be sure. Kansas was coming off a 21-0 victory against Missouri, while the Cornhuskers were trying to regroup following a 24-20 loss at Texas. As a result, "they're not 'The Man' anymore," Kansas defensive end Dion Johnson told the Kansas City Star.

The Jayhawks might have even had a little bit of a swagger.

Well, not exactly. It's difficult to swagger when you're ranked 95th nationally in total defense, 76th in rushing defense, 102nd in pass efficiency defense and 93rd in scoring defense.

Yet at halftime, Nebraska had only 69 yards and trailed 9-0. Go figure.

The Cornhuskers didn't panic, however, according to junior defensive tackle Loran Kaiser. "There was not a lot of yelling, not a lot of screaming" in the locker room, he said.

Nebraska made some adjustments and played well enough the second half to win.

"At halftime, we knew we had our backs to the wall," Coach Frank Solich said.

"We knew we had to establish something in the running game. But the main thing was, we just couldn't con-

tinue to have turnovers, and we couldn't continue to have penalties."

Defensively, the Cornhuskers turned up the pressure on Kansas quarterback Dylen Smith. And offensively they began to move the ball on the ground, rushing for 139 yards in the second half.

Redshirted freshman Dahrran Diedrick gave them a boost, carrying three times for 27 yards on a seven-play, 53-yard touchdown drive that gave them a 17-9 lead.

But the key to the second-half resurgence was special teams, specifically the punt return team and junior Bobby Newcombe, who returned a punt 86 yards for a touchdown.

Newcombe made it look easy. "Opportunity came my way, and I got some great blocks," he said. "When you have a punt return team as great as ours tonight, all you have to do is run."

Split end Matt Davison "made a great block," he said.

"We sat out to win the special teams' battle," said Solich. And they did.

"This is one of the best things that could have happened to us," Kaiser said.

"Everybody kept their head up. I never saw a head drop."

So maybe Kansas was good for what ailed the Cornhuskers. Maybe they needed a close-game victory, regardless of the opponent, instead of a blowout to get ready for their stretch run.

The final three games of the regular season should be entertaining. If Kansas can take Nebraska to the wire, Texas A&M, Kansas State and Colorado certainly are capable of doing the same.

There could be plenty of tension in the next month.

Solich was asked if he thought his team could beat Kansas State by playing as it did against Kansas. "We won't know for a couple of weeks," he said, dodging the question.

He wasn't looking beyond the next game, and the one just completed.

"I think they'll feel good about this," he said.

Even though it didn't fit the pattern established the previous 30 seasons. ■

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years.

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Julius Jackson and the Husker defense turned up the pressure on Kansas quarterback Dylen Smith.



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